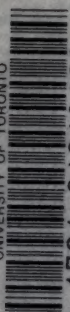
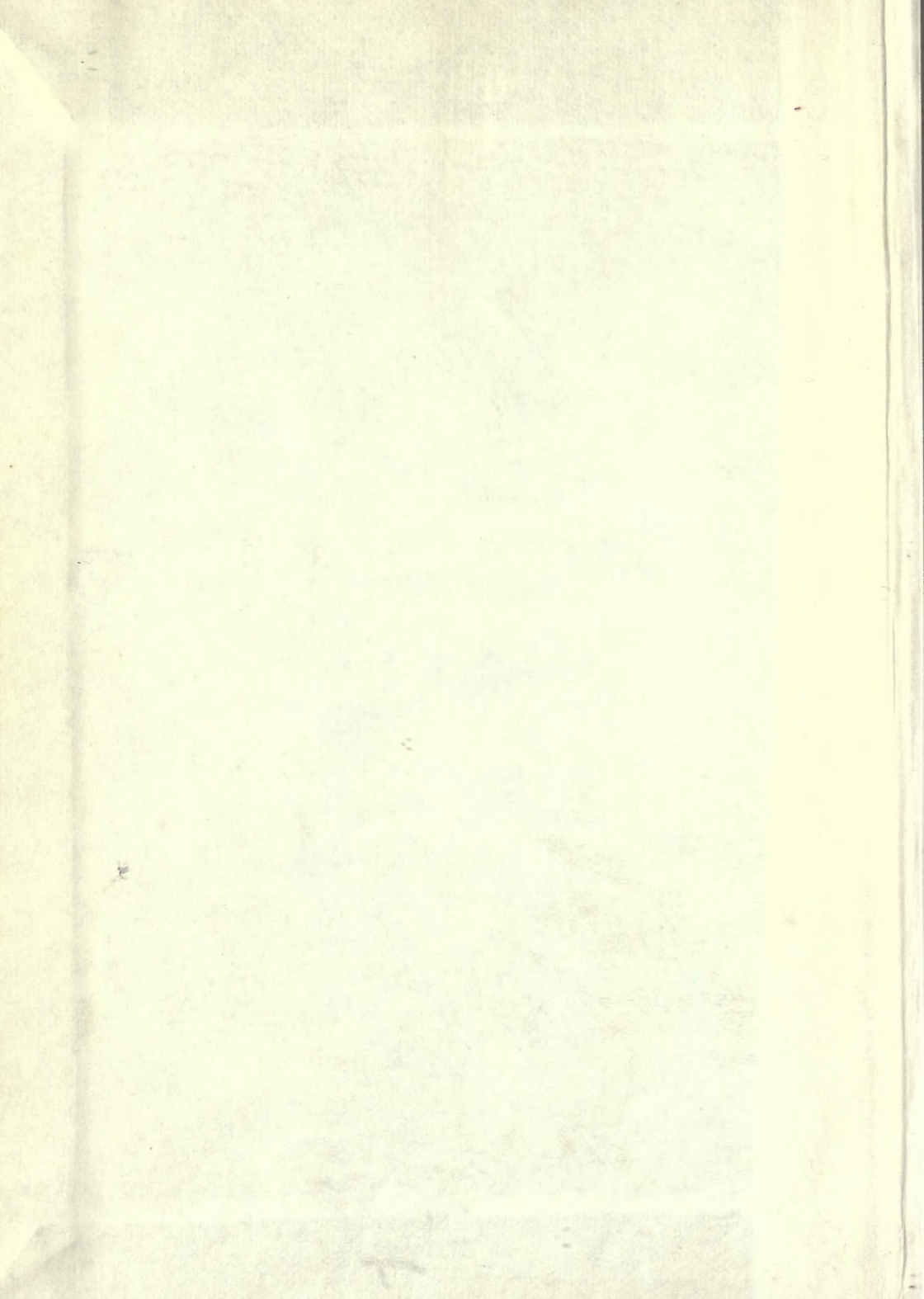


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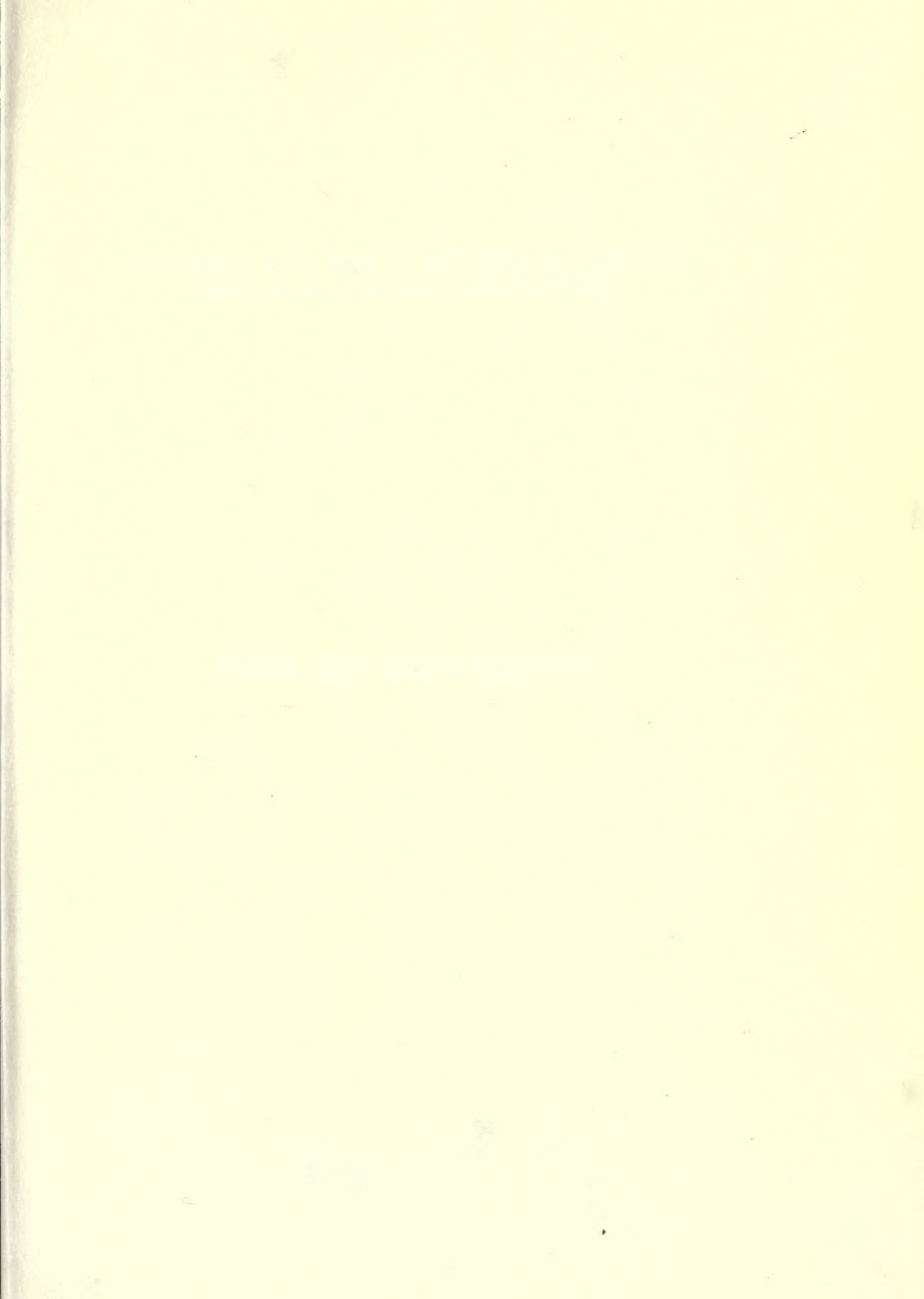














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**ENGLISH CHILDHOOD**

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# English Childhood

Wordsworth's Treatment of Childhood  
in the Light of English Poetry

from

Prior to Crabbe

By

A. CHARLES BABENROTH

*Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the  
Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University*

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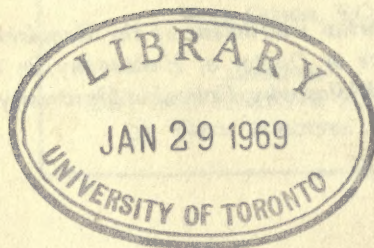
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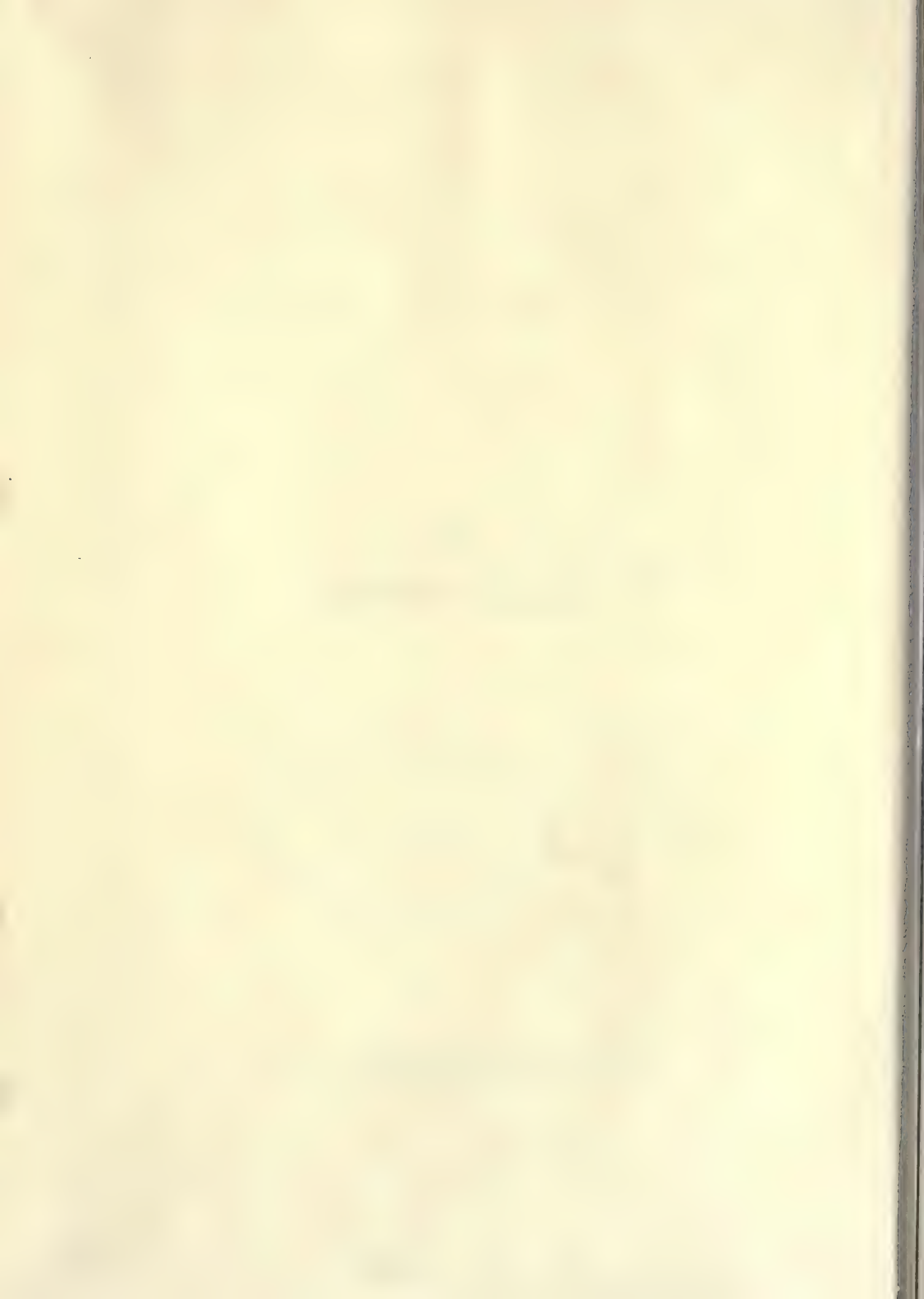


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TO  
MY SON DONALD



## PREFACE

The following essays are based on a dissertation presented for the doctorate in Columbia University. The aim has been to present Wordsworth's rather extensive body of poetry on childhood in its true perspective against the background of eighteenth-century poetry.

In addition to many detached poems on childhood I have used innumerable interesting lines imbedded in poems on subjects remotely or not at all connected with childhood. Such incidental lines, in addition to their occasional charm, are essential for an understanding of the attitude of poets of the eighteenth century toward childhood.

I owe thanks to the Librarian of Columbia University and to Miss Mudge of the library staff for assistance in procuring books and manuscripts; to my wife, for careful reading of proof; to Professor W. P. Trent and Professor E. H. Wright, who read several of the essays; and especially to Professor C. S. Baldwin, who read the entire manuscript and made constructive suggestions of inestimable value.

The essays had their inception in the English Seminar conducted by Professor Ashley Horace Thorndike, whose wide scholarship has been at the same time an inspiration and an invaluable guide in shaping the discussion of the large body of material which represents the accumulated effort of a century on the subject of childhood. To him I am deeply grateful for countless suggestions, always patiently and kindly given.

A. C. B.  
New York,  
November 7, 1922.





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# ENGLISH CHILDHOOD

## INTRODUCTION

The aim in the following chapters is to study Wordsworth's treatment of childhood in the light of English poetry from Matthew Prior to George Crabbe. For a true appreciation of Wordsworth's attitude it is essential to know the place of childhood in the poetry of the eighteenth century.

It is not the intention to review juvenile literature. The object is not to evaluate poetry composed by children or for them. No peculiar value is attached to the precocious verse of Pope, Chatterton, or Wordsworth himself. In fact, unless their precocious verse incorporates lines on childhood, it has no place within the limits of this study.

In the eighteenth century may be observed the beginnings of many modern conceptions in poetry as well as in politics, theology, education, and social welfare. This is especially true with respect to interest in childhood. In order to understand the poet's treatment of childhood in an age of changing values, it is necessary to take into account various influences that made themselves felt in the lives and thoughts of English men and women as well as in English poetry. Earliest of these is Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which persists as a moulding force throughout the century wherever the education of children is discussed. Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* is a definite influence from Thomson to Wordsworth. After the middle of the century there are traces, often tangible, of ideas which derive from Rousseau's *Emile*; and the effects of Revolutionary speculation and social philosophy on the conceptions of Blake

are obvious in his poems about children. The industrial revolution, moreover, offered new problems with regard to child labor, problems akin to those noticed in poetry as early as John Dyer's *The Fleece*. The problem, then, is not merely literary. In so far as poets have touched upon education and social welfare it will be helpful for an understanding of their aims to observe the conflict between old and new forces, and the emergence of modern conceptions in the schools and in the attitude of the public toward children.

Certain themes that are prominent in Wordsworth emerge faintly at first in the work of minor poets who are seldom read now except by students of literature. These *ignes minores*, in whose poetry there is not often grandeur or height, indicate more or less clearly the changes that took place in life and in poetry. The student can not, like Burns, pass by "hunders nameless" poets and versifiers who imitated their betters, but who prepared the way at the same time for inspired poets like Blake and Wordsworth. Their poetry is vital in a study that reflects forces which ultimately brought about epoch-making changes in the attitude of men towards children in the home, in the school, and in industry.

## I

Although no hard-and-fast delimitation of the years that constitute childhood is necessary for the purpose of this study, it will be helpful to observe the ages of children as stated by men of letters themselves. Age is sometimes specifically noted in the title, as in Prior's *To A Child of Quality (five years old, 1704, the author then forty)*. More often the poet merely alludes to the child's age, with the result that it is difficult to determine the exact boundaries set for infancy, childhood, or youth. Cowper's *To My*

*Cousin Anne Bodham* recalls her as no more "Than plaything for a nurse"; she was "A kitten both in size and glee." While comparing the ages of children in *The Excursion* (III, 592-94), Wordsworth states that there was

no wider interval of time  
Between their several births than served for one  
To establish something of a leader's sway.

The line between infancy and childhood is usually vaguely suggested, as in *The Excursion*, by stating that the boy had "overpast the sinless age." Beattie is not specific in the prefatory remarks to *The Minstrel*: his "design was to trace the progress of a Poetical Genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as a Minstrel."

The paragraphs of Isaac Watts in the first half and those of Rousseau after the middle of the century make it possible to construct a schedule of ages. For Watts the years up to four constituted infancy; from four to eight, early childhood; from eight to twelve, childhood; and after that, youth. Rousseau carried infancy to the fifth year; childhood to the twelfth; boyhood to the fifteenth; and youth to the twentieth year.

In *Birth and Education of Genius*, James Cawthorn approximates Watts's age of four as closing the period of infancy:

And Genius now 'twixt three and four,  
Phoebus, according to the rule,  
Resolved to send his son to school.

Wordsworth, on the other hand, holds closer to Rousseau's age of five: at the age when Luke carried in his cheeks "Two steady roses that were five years old," Michael first



made a shepherd's staff for him. Aaron Hill's *The Distinction of Ages* had carried the first period up to the seventh year:

The seven first years of life (man's break of day),  
Gleams of short sense, a dawn of thought display.

The ninth year was frequently chosen as the close of childhood. Swift states in the *Modest Proposal*: "I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny, the youngest being nine years old." Richardson wrote in *Clarissa Harlowe*: "She never was left out of any party of pleasure after she had passed her ninth year." In one of the numerous letters in which he shows a true fatherly tenderness for his son Philip Stanhope, Chesterfield reminds the boy of his ninth birthday, after which he will no longer be a child. Wordsworth is less precise in *The Prelude*. He speaks of himself as "a child not nine years old," and many of his recollections cluster about the period between nine and ten in phrases like "Ere I had told ten birthdays," "twice five summers," and "twice five years or less." In *Michael* the tenth year marks a period; at that age, when Luke was "full ten years old" and was able to stand against the mountain blasts, Michael and his son were companions.

Although it is clear that they were using the word "childhood" without strict regard for age, there is no real inconsistency among poets in their notice of these varying ages as markers of infancy and childhood. Modern child psychology holds that "childhood is usually considered to cover the period between infancy and puberty, or, roughly, between the ages of 3 and 12"; but it also recognizes an overlapping of periods when tests are applied to determine physical, emotional, or intellectual development.<sup>1</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> *A Cyclopaedia of Education*, edited by Paul Monroe, s. v. "Child Psychology."

lines recalling his boyhood friend, Wordsworth felt free to change the reading of 1805, "ere he was ten years old", to

This boy was taken from his mates, and died  
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.<sup>1</sup>

While discussing charity children in his *History of the Poor* (1793), Thomas Ruggles seems to suggest that thirteen or fourteen was considered the close of childhood, at which time the boy was expected to go to work. Mickle refers to this transition in *Commodore Johnstone*:

As childhood closed, thy ceaseless toils began,  
And toils and dangers ripened thee to man.

Transition seems to be indicated by Aaron Hill in *The Distinction of Ages*:

When fourteen springs have bloomed his downy cheek,  
His soft and blushful meanings learn to speak.

In *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (III, 23) Wordsworth gives solemn expression to his regret that childhood can not be extended beyond the age of Confirmation.

The Young-ones gathered in from hill and dale,  
With holiday delight on every brow:  
'Tis past away; far other thoughts prevail;  
For they are taking the baptismal Vow  
Upon their conscious selves; their own lips speak  
The solemn promise. Strongest sinews fail,  
And many a blooming, many a lovely, cheek  
Under the holy fear of God turns pale;  
While on each head his lawn-robed servant lays  
An apostolic hand, and with prayer seals

<sup>1</sup> See *There was a Boy* (1798), in Knight, *Poems of William Wordsworth*, Macmillan, 1896, vol. II, page 58, footnote.



The Covenant. The Omnipotent will raise  
 Their feeble Souls; and bear with *his* regrets,  
 Who, looking round the fair assemblage, feels  
 That ere the Sun goes down their childhood sets.<sup>1</sup>

## II

Although the lines of Catullus, Martial, and Horace on childhood are echoed in English poetry from Ben Jonson to Pope and Gray, the limits of this study forbid even a brief survey of childhood as it is noted in the Greek and Latin literatures. It would, likewise, be impossible to do justice to memorable passages in the Old and the New Testament, and to the many beautiful medieval lyrics of the Virgin and Child, the spirit of which is more or less faithfully preserved in such anonymous songs of universal appeal to the mother heart as *My Sweet Sweeting*, or *Lulla, lulla, thou little tiny child*, and the homely lyric

Fayre maydyn, who is this barn,  
 That thou beriste in thyn arme?

Neither does space allow even a glance at childhood as it is frequently noticed elsewhere in Middle English literature, for example in the Brome miracle play *Abraham and Isaac*, in Chaucer's penetrating lines, and in the *Popular Ballads*.

<sup>1</sup> Compare The Act, The Preservation of the Health and Morals of Apprentices and Others Employed in Cotton and Other Mills, and Cotton and Other Factories: June 22, 1802. One hour each Sunday should be given to teaching the Christian religion, and Confirmation should take place between the fourteenth and eighteenth years. It seems clear that Confirmation has been delayed beyond the usual age of twelve or fourteen, probably because of industrial abuses of child labor. Schedule C of the Act, for better regulation of parish poor children within bills of mortality, passed in 1766, shows that children were at work as early as the age of six. It specifies: "Where sent if past Six Years of Age, and in what work employed."

It is, however, necessary to glance at the poetry of the seventeenth century. The appealing child lyrics in the period from the Earl of Surrey's *The Age of Children Happiest* to Henry Vaughan's *The Retreat* have no parallels at the close of the seventeenth century.

Surrey's pensive mood does not prevent a frankly human approach to his subject. Sir Philip Sidney's *Child-Song* is not colored by moral or theological intentions: Sidney's attitude toward the infant who can not sleep, although his mother sings to him, is almost whimsical and, certainly, human. Nicholas Breton's *A Sweet Lullaby* with rare grace and beauty depicts a mother tenderly singing to her child about the father who "false is fled away." Robert Greene's *Sephestia's Song to Her Child* (from *Menaphon*) has all the charm, tender humanity, and lilt of Elizabethan lyrics on childhood.

Much of the charm of these lyrics survives in Jonson's child poems, which, however, begin to show traces of new literary methods characteristic of the classicist school. Although his lyrics reveal a conscious striving for formal beauty, Jonson is still close to the Elizabethan mood. His lines *On My First Daughter*, *On My First Son*, and *An Epitaph on Salathiel Pavy* breathe true parental tenderness. In these poems the personal attitude allows the expression of genuine sentiments. The last line of the poem on his daughter echoes a classical convention, but the father's heart is in the poem. For so genuine an expression of parental grief as is found in the lines *On My First Son*, the reader of poetry must wait more than one hundred years after Jonson.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare *On the Loss of an Only Son Robert Marquis of Normanby*, by John Sheffield Duke of Buckinghamshire.

Several of Robert Herrick's lyrics combine with the exquisite form of Jonson's poems a sympathetic insight not to be found in verse at the close of the century. The form and diction of his *Epitaph Upon A Child* and *Upon A Child that Dyed* recall his master Jonson. *A Grace for A Child* is characterized by spontaneous simplicity.<sup>1</sup> Herrick's *To His Saviour, A Child; A Present, By A Child*, without losing sight of the human child, adds something of the mystic fervor and spiritual suggestion common in the most inspired passages on childhood in the seventeenth century. This element had already appeared in the well known *Burning Babe* of Southwell. The most exalted expression of the mystic longing for childhood days and moods is found in Henry Vaughan's *The Retreat*.

Happy those early days when I  
Shined in my angel-infancy.  
Before I understood this place  
Appointed for my second race,  
Or taught my soul to fancy aught  
But a white, celestial thought;  
When yet I had not walked above  
A mile or two from my first love,  
And looking back—at that short space—  
Could see a glimpse of His bright face. . . .

With these immortal lines should be associated the paragraph penned by Bishop Earle in his *Microcosmographie*: "A *child* is a man in a small letter. His soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with observations of the world. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Here a little child I stand,  
Heaving up my either hand;  
Cold as paddocks though they be,  
Here I lift them up to thee,  
For a benizon to fall  
On our meat, and on us all. Amen.



He is purely happy, because he knows no evil. . . . Hee kisses and loves all. And, when the smart of the rod is past, smiles on his bearer. The elder hee grows hee is a staire lower from God. Hee is the Christian's example, and the old man's relapse. The one imitates his pureness, the other his simplicity. Could hee put off his body with his little coat, hee had got eternitie without a burthen, and exchanged but one Heaven for another."

On the one hand lyrics of the Elizabethan age give frankly human and vigorous expression to themes from childhood, while on the other the deep insight of Vaughan and Herrick clothes in tender lines their sense of "something more" than physical reality. Childhood in the sense of the Elizabethan singers and their followers, who in Vaughan carried interpretation to its highest spiritual possibilities, disappears from English poetry until in the eighteenth century those sentimental poets who prepared the way for Wordsworth take up the theme again haltingly.

In Crashaw's *Holy Nativity of Our Lord*, the shepherds are named Tityrus and Thyrsis. Milton's *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* contains allusions to Cynthia, Apollo, and Delphos, and *On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough* to Jove, Elysian fields, and Olympus. In these poems the tendency away from direct observation of children and toward classical embellishment is as clear as in Herrick's *The Wounded Cupid*. This poem reveals those delightful toyings with the pagan Cupid which were to dominate classicist complimentary verse ostensibly written on the theme of childhood.

The education of the age was thoroughly classical. The poets most studied, quoted, and imitated were those of Greece and Rome. While exalting the classical standard, men of letters restricted themselves largely to the methods

employed by Horace and Virgil. In imitating these poets, they aimed to use subject-matter susceptible of treatment in the manner which they considered classical.<sup>1</sup>

Poets of this school seldom show a vital conception of childhood. Waller felt it necessary to justify his use of English in the epitaph on the only son of Lord Andover; and in a poem *On English Verse* he writes that poets who seek a lasting reputation must carve in Latin or Greek. It is hardly to be expected that poetry conceived in such a mood will reveal a lively appreciation of children. Waller's approach was artificial when he wrote that in the starry night fond children cry for "the rich spangles that adorn the sky." His favorite choice of theme and development is typically illustrated in *St. James Park*. Children do not appear in the one hundred and fifty lines of the poem; but a thousand cupids ride the billows. The poem represents a conception in which human childhood can have no part. The subject is embroidered with classicalities because the gallant poet is interested in fine compliments. Only cupids, the spies of Thetis, are of use to him.

Abraham Cowley, who helped prepare the way for Dryden, and enjoyed a reading public deep into the eighteenth century, also reveals tendencies that carried poets away from the Elizabethan tradition. As his classical attainments are closely bound up with his school life, he has enshrined the memory of his teacher, Mr. Jordan, second master at Westminster. The master's virtues, his great store of learning, and his simple character are discerned with difficul-

<sup>1</sup> In *The Complete English Gentleman* Defoe satirizes classicalities: "Not an author writes a pamphlet, not a poet a copy of verses, no, not to his mistress, tho she knows nothing of the matter, but he draws a bill upon Horace or Virgil or some of the old chiming train, and talks as familiarly of them as if they had been brought up together."



ty among generalizations and elaborations. The unwillingness of the classicists to treat childhood in terms of common observation, and their imitation of the style and diction of Latin literature, are clearly indicated in the artificial *Happy Birth of the Duke*, in which the child is the occasion rather than the subject of the poem. There is a clumsy echo like this:

Time, which devours  
Its own sons, will be glad and proud of yours.

Stilted phrases mar the effusion, which might have been phrased as a poem of simple, unaffected childhood, for Cowley, as private secretary to Queen Henrietta Maria during her exile, was intimately acquainted with those to whom the poem is addressed.

Dryden's most appealing lines on childhood recall at times the happy phrasing of Jonson, as in the *Pastoral Elegy on the Death of Amyntas* and *Death of a Very Young Gentleman*. His beautiful lines in the latter poem reveal the growing tendency to treat the child in terms of manhood. The custom of magnifying the helpless infant into the stature of a man, in part explained by the particular subject, is manifest in certain lines of *Britannia Rediviva*.

"Poetic diction" is in itself, as an ideal of elegance, unfavorable to the portrayal of childhood. Addison's *Princess of Wales* indicates how childhood serves merely as a point of departure for strained compliments. The general reliance on conventional imagery is obvious in a poem addressed to the *House of Nassau* by John Hughes, who echoes the same classical parallel Dryden had employed in his lines to the Stuarts. Addison's *Campaign* is a typical illustration of the way childhood was noticed to heighten effect in panegyrical verse. John Philipps's *Blenheim* reads like an unconscious satire of the type. In the passage in

which Philipps depicts infant suffering to heighten the destructiveness of war, the situation is generalized and the lines are crowded with pretentious phrases.

where cities stood,  
Well-fenced and numerous, desolation reigns  
And emptiness: dismayed, unfed, unhoused,  
The widow and the orphan stroll around  
The desert wide; with oft retorted eye  
They view the gaping walls and poor remains  
Of mansions once their own, (now loathsome haunts  
Of birds obscene), bewailing loud the loss  
Of spouse, or sire, or son, ere manly prime,  
Slain in sad conflict, and complain of Fate  
As partial and too rigorous, nor find  
Where to retire themselves, or whence appease  
The afflictive keen desire for food, exposed  
To winds and storms and jaws of savage beasts.

In the mood of the classicists, childhood was a period to be rapidly passed over. Like Dryden, Pope also employs the rapid generalized summary of infancy and childhood.<sup>1</sup> Until he reaches the state of manhood in his summary, Pope is not interested in details. The first two lines rapidly carry the reader over the period of infancy, and the couplet on childhood is noncommittal as to details.

Pope's *Messiah* was written in imitation of Virgil's *Pollio*. References to infancy are uninspired. In Pope's lines the child becomes an "auspicious babe" and "smiling infant" who will play with the "crested basilisk and speckled snake." It will look with pleasure upon the "green lustre" of the scales, and will innocently play with the "forky tongue." Such elaborated accessories are out of harmony

<sup>1</sup> The classicists were undoubtedly indebted to a passage in Horace's *Ars Poetica* for this. See Roscommon's translation. But note also the speech of Jaques in *As You Like It*.—*Essay on Man*.

with childhood.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Pope was temperamentally not fitted for the task of phrasing such a situation with Old Testament simplicity. Homely surroundings were not congenial to his powers. "He had been at his best in the speeches of the Iliad, and groaned heavily over the homely scenes in Ithaca." Wordsworth cited Pope's *Messiah* as an illustration of reprehensible diction.

Certain passages in John Gay's *Trivia* (1716) reveal a close approach to realistic observation of childhood. Yet even here Gay finds it necessary to use the machinery of classical mythology. He traces the parentage and "secret rise" of the "sable race" known as London bootblacks. While writing of the "tide whose sable streams beneath the city glide" he elaborates the legend of the goddess Cloacina. She fell in love with a London streetsweeper and gave birth to a child who "through various risks, in years improved." Then follows a brief account of the first years in the life of a London waif, with minute details of Holborn life, which as far as they go rival in vividness the circumstantial account in Defoe's *Colonel Jacques*. The little waif's mother finally persuades the gods to take the foundling's part and to teach him a useful trade. Diana furnishes a brush made of the "strong bristles of the mighty boar." The god of day provides a tripod "amid the crowded way to raise the dirty foot." Neptune contributes "fetid oil pressed from the enormous whale," and Vulcan "aids with soot the new jappanning art." As Cloacina descends at sunrise, she finds the "sturdy lad" musing over Holborn's "black canal of mud," and bemoaning his lack of father and mother. The goddess mother soothes him and directs him in the employment of the gifts of the gods.

<sup>1</sup> Compare William Thompson's *The Nativity* (1736) and *The Magi: A Sacred Eclogue* for similar treatment.

The fine attitude of Elizabethan singers, and the gentle mysticism of poets like Vaughan, are not to be found in those poets who adhered to the school of Dryden and Pope. During the first half of the eighteenth century, poetry was largely didactic, satiric, and rational, so that little place was found for children and the parental emotions for them. Parents have always loved and observed their children, and this affectionate regard has been expressed in poetry from the time of Homer's Astyanax. Very rarely, however, before the close of the eighteenth century have children seized upon the poetic imagination. The great movements in thought and emotion which stirred the century tended more and more to direct attention to the child. This attention was both reflected and stimulated by the poets whose verse is the subject of this study.



## CHAPTER I

### IN OUR INFANCY

In tracing the changes which took place in the poets' attitude toward infants and very young children, it is not essential to take into account a very large number of lines imbedded in poems on subjects not connected with childhood. Such incidental references do not as a rule indicate that the poet is writing of childhood in a sympathetic mood or with his eye on the individual child. Sometimes there is a charming glimpse which the lover of children is not willing to forget, as in John Philipps's *Cyder*, where children are momentarily noticed while they are gathering cowslips. Occasionally, as in the satirical lines of Prior and Lloyd, side glances to childhood are lively and enjoyable.<sup>1</sup> Most often, however, they are mechanical and serve merely as more or less colorless examples to illustrate patly a point which the poet wishes to emphasize.<sup>2</sup> For a right un-

<sup>1</sup> Compare Cowper's charming lines *On Observing some Names of little Note recorded in the Biographia Britannica*:

So when a child, as playful children use,  
Has burnt to tinder a stale last year's news,  
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire—  
There goes my lady, and there goes the squire;  
There goes the parson, oh! illustrious spark,  
And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk.

<sup>2</sup> Langhorne has been discussing innate ideas, and makes his point ("No innate knowledge on the soul impressed") in the lines:

See the pleased infant court the flaming brand,  
Eager to grasp the glory in its hand.

(*Enlargement of the Mind*)

Samuel Boyse's *Hope's Farewell* is colorless:

The joys you gave my youth to taste  
Were but like children's toys at best.

derstanding of the fundamental change which took place during the eighteenth century in the poets' treatment of very young children, it will be necessary to observe poems in which the child is specifically the subject.

The detached poem was suggested usually by the child's birth, birthday, or death; but some of the most successful poems are not associated with special occasions. Before the middle of the century, poets as a rule addressed themselves to children of quality, and were interested in childhood rather than in the individual. During and after the sixties, the democratization of poetry is reflected in the increasing number of poems on children not connected with the nobility or the royal household. It will be noted that during the closing decades of the century the poet is occupied not merely with childhood, but also with the child. Although it is inevitable that in all these poems the child should be closely associated with his father and mother, special attention will be given to the poet's willingness and ability to observe the child as an individual being.

Among the writers of occasional verse in the early eighteenth century, Prior alone is regularly remembered by compilers of anthologies of children's verse. His charming poems reveal a delightful urbanity and lightness of touch that make him a master of *vers de société*. He shows perfect command of the adroitly turned compliment. If the study of childhood in poetry were extended to include the poetic use of Cupid, it would be rewarding to consider Prior's sensuous realization of this pagan god, who frequently is a lively actor in the poems addressed to Chloe. The poet's conception of the young god is so vivid that he portrays him as sobbing before his mother Venus in childish

accents. *To My Lord Buckhurst (very young, playing with a cat)* shows Prior's charming treatment of the god of love, and is as dainty in conception and phrasing as his effusions to Chloe.

The posthumously published *To A Child of Quality (five years old, 1704, the author then forty)* is too well known to need comment. Study of the poem reveals that only three stanzas are addressed to the child as a child. In the four closing stanzas she is treated as a girl and young woman. Prior in his most sprightly manner contrasts his age with her youth. He may write only until she can spell; and he gives point to his feigned regret by observing that their different ages are ordained to move so that he will be "past making love"

When she begins to comprehend it.

It is a frankly artful effusion. The child of quality is not so much the subject as the occasion of the poem. Prior expresses his middle-age interest in the child of quality, not by portraying an individual child but by assuming an air of playful gallantry.<sup>1</sup>

Although more didactic, *A Letter (to the Honourable Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, when a child)* is written with a closer approach to the child spirit. The poem lacks the delicate weaving of his other pieces, but in its headlong tumble of rhythm reflects the merry Prior who, we are told, delighted to be the carefree companion of children. And no doubt he succeeded in convincing children of his genuineness, as Peggy's later tribute, after she had become Duchess of Portland, indicates: "he made himself

<sup>1</sup> Compare Ernest Bernbaum, *English Poets of the Eighteenth Century*, p. xxi.



beloved by every living thing in the house—master, child, servant, human creature or animal.”<sup>1</sup>

*The Female Phaeton* was a favorite of that modern singer of child lyrics, Swinburne, who called it the “most adorable of nursery idylls that ever was or will be.” It is a rollicking ballad that gives no certain clue as to the age of Kitty. Vain Kitty is inflamed with a “little” rage at being confined with Abigails and holy books while Jenny tastes the sweets of society. She wishes to “quit the score” with proud Jenny by making all her lovers fall. The closing stanzas show all Prior’s verve and lightheartedness together with the finality of phrase of which he was master:

Fondness prevailed, mamma gave way;  
Kitty, at heart’s desire,  
Obtained the chariot for a day,  
And set the world on fire.

The charm of Prior’s child poems lies in the make-believe of the adult who can unbend far enough to enter into the spirit of children and who brings courtly compliment, classical reminiscence, and affectionate admiration, all in homage to

<sup>1</sup> Prior’s *Alma* contains lively similitudes:

For as young children, who are tied in  
Go-carts, to keep their steps from sliding,  
When members knit, and legs grow stronger,  
Make use of such machine no longer,  
But leap *pro libitu*, and scout  
On horse called hobby, or without,  
Thus each should down with all he thinks,  
As boys eat bread to fill up chinks.

Unlike his poems inspired by children of quality, these lines reflect middle-class child life as he might have observed it in such a home as that of the common soldier and his wife in Long Acre, noticed by Johnson when he remarked upon Prior’s willingness to descend to mean company after an evening with Bolingbroke, Pope, and Swift.



the child of quality. Prior's poems represent neo-classicist poetry doing its very prettiest for the infant and young child.

Ambrose Philips phrased fine compliments to children of his patrons, but was so unfortunate as to bring down upon himself the nickname "Namby Pamby." The term, according to Mr. Gosse, was first used by Henry Carey, author of *Sally in Our Alley*, in a parody mentioned by Swift in 1725.<sup>1</sup> Known largely through the contemptuous remarks of his greater contemporary, Pope, Philips is at a disadvantage with his modern reader: "Gay is writing tales for Prince William: I suppose Mr. Philips will take this very ill for two reasons; one that he thinks all childish things belong to him, and the other because he'll take it ill to be taught that one may write things to a child without being childish."

Nevertheless, the poems of Philips show signs of a new taste. He seeks a language of resemblance that will reflect the sweetness and grace of childhood, as is clear from the lines *To the Honourable Miss Carteret*:

How shall I, or shall the Muse,  
Language of resemblance choose?  
Language like thy mien and face  
Full of sweetness, full of grace.

He traces the child's growth from year to year by beholding the freshness of spring after spring, with each time a "brighter bloom" in the child. Although this attitude indicates a tendency to break away from classicist standards, he is chiefly concerned, like Prior, with the conscious belle who will exert her maiden reign over "fond beholders," fully half the poem being devoted to a description of her future courtship and nuptials.

<sup>1</sup> The Dictionary of National Biography notes that the third edition of Carey's 1713 publication contains the "Namby Pamby" poem, s. v. Carey, Henry.

*To Miss Margaret Pulteney (daughter of Daniel Pulteney, Esq.) in the Nursery, April 27, 1727*, is interesting. The "Dimply damsel, sweetly smiling" rhythm is attractive but not sustained. Philips again avoids direct observation in the thought that ten years hence when he has ceased composing, "beardless poets" will be "fondly rhyming," and accusing "each killing feature" of the cruel maid. There is a convincing touch in the lines on these youthful poets who will be

Fescued now, perhaps, in spelling.

*A Supplication for Miss Carteret in the Small-Pox, Dublin, July 31, 1725*, is a dignified if somewhat self-conscious prayer for a child suffering from the dread children's scourge of the century. The disease was feared in all English households. The early education of John Scott of Amwell was desultory because his father had such an extreme dread of the small-pox that the family repeatedly moved to shun it. Shaftesbury was shocked to hear that the measles had been followed in his sister's household by the small-pox "which I pray God were as safe over with them." Lady Montagu's letters to her daughter, and her earlier letters from Constantinople, frequently discuss the small-pox; and her efforts to ameliorate the condition of children by means of inoculation are well known. The same high seriousness and dread sincerity which characterize numerous eighteenth-century poems on the recovery of adults from small-pox permeate the lines of Philips.

*To Miss Charlotte Pulteney, in her mother's arms, May 1, 1724*, is the prettiest of his complimentary verses. Philips shows felicity of phrase in suggestions of the child's heed-

less prattle. His charming analysis is illuminated, furthermore, by a pleasing image from bird life. There is freshness and appropriateness in the lines which associate the sportive green linnet and the wanton infant. In the early period it is probably the first detached lyric that does not employ a nature image mechanically in a similitude. It represents an early effort to express something of the spiritual connotation of the linnet and the infant by an imaginative perception of the underlying unity of feeling. For once, too, the child is not lost in the marriageable maiden. In an attempt to be "simply elegant to please," Philips has written a masterpiece.

Timely blossom, infant fair,  
Fondling of a happy pair,  
Every morn, and every night,  
Their solicitous delight,  
Sleeping, walking, still at ease,  
Pleasing, without skill to please,  
Little gossip, blithe and hale,  
Tattling many a broken tale,  
Singing many a tuneless song,  
Lavish of a heedless tongue,  
Simple maiden, void of art,  
Babbling out the very heart,  
Yet abandoned to thy will,  
Yet imagining no ill,  
Yet too innocent to blush,  
Like the linnet in the bush,  
To the mother-linnet's note  
Moduling her slender throat,  
Chirping forth thy pretty joys,  
Wanton in the change of toys,  
Like the linnet green, in May,  
Flitting to each bloomy spray,  
Wearied then, and glad of rest,  
Like the linnet in the nest.



*To Miss Georgiana, youngest daughter to Lord Carteret, August 10, 1725*, indicates an attempt to write from direct observation.

Is the silken web so thin  
As the texture of her skin?  
Can the lily and the rose  
Such unsullied hue disclose?  
Are the violets so blue  
As her veins exposed to view?

In their appropriateness to the subject, these happy parallels are indicative of more than an effort to phrase literary compliments. The willingness to observe such details counts for much during the first quarter of the century.

The poems of Ambrose Philips are not as well known as Prior's, but two of them are historically important as revealing early evidence of a new taste. Seventy-five years before Wordsworth he observed the green linnet and brought it into connection with childhood.

In John Gay's lines *To a Lady* the child is the occasion of the poem. Like other poets, Gay observes the "tender mother" with her "infant train," and notes every "dawning grace." The children are perfect images of their mother.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Set phrases and imagery preclude vital treatment. These are especially noticeable in the countless panegyrical and epithalamic poems directed to members of the nobility and the reigning house. These poems echo the earlier classicist use of cupids, charms, and graces, or in a vein of strained compliment they felicitate bride and groom on prospective joys of the nursery (e. g., Thomas Newcomb's *Ode to Lord Carmarthen on his Marriage with Lady Anne Seymour*, 1719). Girls are invariably the image of their mother, and boys always reflect the manliness and power of their father. Such lines are without doubt echoes of lines like those in the Nuptial Ode of Catullus. (cp. John Gilbert Cooper's *Song to Winifreda*.)



The early virtues of the son promise new-won honors.<sup>1</sup> Gay is able to focus his attention on the child only momentarily:

When he the tale of Audenard repeats,  
His little heart with emulation beats;  
With conquests yet to come his bosom glows,  
He dreams of triumphs and of vanquished foes.  
Each year with arts shall store his ripening brain,  
And from his grandsire he shall learn to reign.

This is commonplace enough when judged by romantic standards; but in view of classicist unwillingness to analyze individual traits of young children, Gay's passing notice of the budding virtues and emotional reactions of the boy shows an incidental interest not common in the verse of his day. As in his lines on the sentimental apprentice who is poring over one of Otway's plays at a bookstall (*Trivia*), Gay reveals a willingness to find specific illustrations in place of the customary generalizations.

Lady Winchilsea's beautiful poem *On the Death of the Honourable Mr. James Thynne (Younger son to the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Weymouth)* comes from the heart of the poet, and, like her lines that reveal fresh observation of external nature, is not characteristic of the age.

<sup>1</sup> Prose and poetry indicate that the preference for male children was strong. Compare the letter to Lovelace (*Clarissa Harlowe*): "May the marriage be crowned with a great many fine boys (I desire no girls) to build up again a family so ancient. The first boy shall take my surname by act of Parliament. That is my will." Langhorne's *Owen of Carron* has the lines,

In fortune rich, in offspring poor,  
An only daughter crowned his bed.

Shenstone's *Economy* and Glover's *Leonidas* indicate that the childless marriage was looked upon as unfortunate. Wordsworth's *The Excursion* speaks of lonely cottagers as the "wedded pair in childless solitude." The dame awaits the return of her husband, "True as the stock-dove to her shallow nest."

Far from being representative, the poem is exceptional in point of view and choice of material. She writes with the affection of a close friend. After she has addressed herself to soothing the parents' grief, the boy's entombment is sympathetically phrased and is the occasion for notice of his ancestors, her intimate knowledge of the family adding vivid individual touches which make the passage more than a catalogue of titled names.

She tries to dissipate the gloom by rescuing, if she may, the memory of what they "lately saw so fresh and fair." Among the "beauties of his blooming age" she had noted

The pleasing light, that from his eyes was cast,  
Like hasty beams, too vigorous to last.

She recalls harmless sports with his courser on the lawn. He was sprightly as the "enlivened game," and bold in the chase,

Yet in the palace tractable and mild,  
Perfect in all the duties of a child.

For its time this poem is unique in the marked tendency to close observation of an individual child. It gives intimate glimpses of the child against the home background. In many of her lines Lady Winchilsea is an early forerunner of those poets who wrote at the close of the century.

Children are noticed only vaguely in Aaron Hill's lines *Writ Upon a Pane of Glass in Westminster House under the names of his four children* (1731). He notes that all was happy in his household while a living mother exercised her guardian care,

But, joyless, since their sweet supporter died,  
They wander now, through life, with half a guide.

Francis Fawkes's *On the Death of a Young Gentleman, September, 1739*, is preachy, and generalizes with little attempt

to individualize beyond the reference to the child's taking away

Ere the first tender down o'erspread your chin,  
A stranger yet to sorrow, and to sin.

The poet's sentiments are dignified and appropriate, but there is no inclination to analyze the child's character or to notice individualizing traits.<sup>1</sup>

The poet's devotion to his mother, which found expression in poetry from Thomson to Wordsworth, did not at first stimulate recollections of childhood. Pope, who throughout the eighteenth century was held up as a model of filial piety, expressed affection for his mother in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735). But he did not severely modify the precept of his school that there must be no display of purely

<sup>1</sup> The eighteenth-century tendency to moralizing resulted in the employment of generalized images that did not demand close observation of children. Thomson's method of generalized description is reflected in his treatment at the close of *Spring*, where he contemplates domestic felicity with children at the heart of the family. He phrases the child element in terms like "smiling offspring"; he observes that "infant reason grows apace" and calls for the "kind hand of an assiduous care." There is more vitality in the lines which portray the congenial moral element:

Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,  
To teach the young idea how to shoot,  
To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,  
To breathe the enlivening spirit, and to fix  
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.

Hill's deep interest in his children is felt in his poem *To Miranda* (*After marriage, with Mr. Locke's Treatise on Education*). It indicates that he put into his wife's hands the volume which would serve as "a glass" to show her "what these infants are" in order that she might "by this just light direct their opening way." Yet he followed the literary method then in vogue, which allowed him to rest in a generalization.



personal emotion. He alludes to his tender duties in prolonging the life of his aged mother "with lenient arts" by rocking the "cradle of reposing age."

Ten years earlier, the romantically inclined Thomson endeavored to break through this restraint in his poem *On the Death of His Mother* (1725). He wished to give free expression to his sorrow; face to face with sad reality, he set out to thrust aside convention in order to write from the heart.

Ye fabled Muses, I your aid disclaim,  
Your airy raptures, and your fancied flame:  
True genuine woe my throbbing breast inspires,  
Love prompts my lays, and filial duty fires;  
The soul springs instant at the warm design,  
And the heart dictates every flowing line.

But Thomson can not wholly depart from poetic methods of his generation. In the fluctuations of his emotion he recalls how his widowed mother, her orphans about her, often "upbraided her needy hands" that could not accomplish all she had planned for her children. He alludes to his brothers and sisters, whom she left behind reluctantly. As is to be expected in a poem composed during the first quarter of the century, his strongest emotion is revealed in recollection not of early childhood but of his departure from Leith for London, after which he did not again see his mother. He reproaches himself for having left her. That night of embarkation is now a torture to him: "may darkness dye it with the deepest stains." In the tumult of his grief he wishes that he had been lost at sea, and that fate had not reserved him for the unruly woe he is now suffering. But he conquers his depression, and sees his mother "with immortal beauty glow." She no longer bears the "early wrinkle" which was "care-contracted" in work for her children among the "unnumbered ills" of poverty,



For see! attended by the angelic throng,  
Through yonder worlds of light she glides along.

Langhorne's much later poem *On His Mother* (1759) shows little advance over Thomson's treatment:

Source of my life, that led my tender years,  
With all a parent's pious fears,  
That nursed my infant thought, and taught my mind to grow.

Although his recollection of childhood is more extensive than Thomson's, it is not more detailed:

Careful she marked each dangerous way,  
Where youth's unwary footsteps stray:  
She taught the struggling passions to subside;  
Where sacred truth, and reason guide,  
In virtue's glorious path to seek the realms of day.

The closer observation of Ambrose Philips, Gay, and Lady Winchilsea becomes clear by comparison with Walter Harte's *To the Right Honourable Lady Hertford, upon the birth of Lord Beauchamp* (1721?). In this minor versifier the fashion of avoiding details of direct observation of the infant stands out baldly. The "gentle infant" is adjured to rise from his slumbers, to lift his fair head and "unfold" his "radiant eyes." While every bosom beats with heightened pleasure,

Surrounding eyes devour the beauteous boy.

As if this were sufficiently close approach to direct contemplation, Harte is off with the statement that the child is destined to be an ornament in other courts where he will "wound the hearts of beauties yet unborn."<sup>1</sup> After this the

<sup>1</sup> In Russell's sonnet ("Dear babe, whose meaning by fond looks expressed"), the child is less the subject than the poet himself. When he is thinking of the child, after the opening lines, he is concerned about her "riper year."

poet returns to the beau in embryo and invokes the "gentle Nine" to descend and deck the infant with laurels and bays.<sup>1</sup>

William Whitehead's *Charge to the Poets* (1762) advises poets to leave traditional rhyming in which language "Descends like similes from Bard to Bard."<sup>2</sup> Poets have too long copied Greece and Rome.<sup>3</sup> Although Whitehead's birthday odes often lean heavily on Venus and the Graces, his delightful poem *On the Birth-day of a Young Lady (Four Years Old)* reveals an attempt to hold the attention focused on the child. In place of insipid compliments there is a simple phrasing of the joy of parents over the first spoken words of their offspring. The poem has been overlooked by compilers of anthologies, but deserves a place in collections of childhood verse.

<sup>1</sup> Swift's *Directions for making a birth-day song* (1729) specifically ridicules classicalities:

To form a just and finished piece,  
Take twenty gods of Rome or Greece,  
Whose godship are in chief request,  
And fit your present subject best;  
And should it be your hero's case,  
To have both male and female race,  
Your business must be to provide  
A score of goddesses beside.

<sup>2</sup> In *A Love Song (in the modern taste)*, Swift takes a rhythmical fling at the vogue of Cupid:

Fluttering spread thy purple pinions,  
Gentle Cupid! o'er my heart;  
I a slave in thy dominions,  
Nature must give way to art.

<sup>3</sup> Thank heaven the times are changed; no poets now  
Need roar for Bacchus or to Venus bow.

The rosebud opens on her cheek,  
 The meaning eyes begin to speak;  
 And in each smiling look is seen  
 The innocence which plays within.  
 Nor is the fault'ring tongue confined  
 To lisp the dawns of the mind,  
 But fair and full her words convey  
 The little all they have to say;  
 And each fond parent, as they fall,  
 Finds volumes in that little all.

Criticism of contemporary poetry may, also, be indicative of progress. Poets themselves, after the middle of the century, were ready for a change. This is clear from Lloyd's *The Poetry Professors*, in which Lloyd is following up Swift's early protests.<sup>1</sup> He is stirred to rebellion by fulsome complimentary verse, and birthday odes are an abomination.<sup>2</sup> Now that England has not lost her prayers, and "A royal babe, a prince of Wales" has been born to George,

Poets! I pity all your nails—  
 What reams of paper will be spoiled.  
 What graduses be daily soiled  
 By inky fingers, greasy thumbs,  
 Hunting the word that never comes.

<sup>1</sup> The use of children to heighten effect aroused the ire of Swift. In the *Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General* he exposes this treatment as so much sham:

Behold his funeral appears;  
 Nor widow's sighs nor orphan's tears  
 Wont at such times each heart to pierce,  
 Attend the progress of his hearse.  
 But what of that? his friends may say  
 He had those honours in his day,  
 True to his profit and his pride,  
 He made them weep before he died.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *The Fanciad, an Heroic Poem* (1743):

\* No hackneyed Plunger, Mine—no Birth-Day Drone.

He is disgusted with the classical trumpery of verse that will force pagan gods to walk again in triumph at the Christian birth of the prince.<sup>1</sup> Poets of trim academic taste will

lug them in by head and shoulders,  
To be the speakers, or beholders.  
Mars shall present him with a lance,  
To humble Spain and conquer France;  
The Graces, buxom, blithe, and gay,  
Shall at his cradle dance the hay;  
And Venus, with her train of loves,  
Shall bring a thousand pair of doves  
To bill, to coo, to whine, to squeak,  
Through all the dialects of Greek.<sup>2</sup>

Signs of a change in point of view are noticeable also in Miss Whately's verses. She exalts simplicity and holds it

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Gratulatio solennis Universitatis Oxoniensis ob celcissimum Ger. Fred. Aug. Williae Principem, Ger. III et Charlottae Reg. auspiciatissime natum. Oxonii 1762.*

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd found more congenial matter in the homes of middle-class Englishmen. The most extended lively passage that throws light on eighteenth-century nursery methods in London occurs in Robert Lloyd's *Chit-Chat*. The situation is dramatically conceived at the moment when Mrs. Brown and her companion are about to leave on a shopping tour. Jacky insists on accompanying his mother. In her attempts to reconcile Jacky to his fate, Mrs. Brown runs the gamut of appeals by frightening him with the suggestion of "bugaboes" and a "naughty horse" that will bite him, and the mob that will tread him under foot. Jacky has by this time descended from crying to whining, but his mother persists in warning him that he might "better blubber, than be lame." She coaxes him to her with "Come, come, then, give mamma a kiss," calls Kitty to take Jacky and "fetch him down the last new toy," and to make him as merry as she can.—Compare also Tom Careful's son and daughter in Somerville's *The True Use of the Looking-Glass*.



a virtue to be a stranger to birthnight balls.<sup>1</sup> In *Table Talk* Cowper joins the democratic chorus and pities kings upon whom worship waits

Obsequious from the cradle to the throne.  
Before whose infant eyes the flatterer bows,  
And binds a wreath about their baby brows.<sup>2</sup>

In *Hope*, his further strictures on man, who in his nurse's lap seems to have all the charms of a cherub, but is in reality

the genuine offspring of revolt,  
Stubborn and sturdy, a wild ass's colt,

smack of the late-century period of the Revolution.

In his lines on the *Death of an Infant*, Lovibond shows a desire to substitute for well-worn sentiments and theological commonplaces a naturalistic conception that is new in this type of poem.<sup>3</sup> The child is blessed whom Nature's gentle hand has taken

E'en in his childish days, ere yet he knew  
Or sin, or pain, or youthful passion's force.  
In Earth's soft lap, beneath the flowery turf,  
His peaceful ashes sleep.

Beattie's *Ode on Lord Hay's Birthday* reflects sentimental humanitarianism. Beattie protests that his muse is

<sup>1</sup> *The Lady's Poetical Magazine or Beauties of British Poetry*, Vol. 1, 1781.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Charles Churchill's *The Ghost*:  
Or for some infant doomed by fate  
To wallow in a large estate,  
With rhymes the cradle must adorn,  
To tell the world a fool is born.

<sup>3</sup> Gray is conventional in *Epitaph on a Child*.—Lovibond's *The Death of a Young Gentleman* shows traces of naturalism. See also Cawthorn's *A Father's Extempore Consolation* ("on the death of two daughters, who lived only two days").

unskilled in venal praise, and unstained with "flattery's art."  
He emphasizes democratic virtues. As it matures, the  
child shall

let the social instinct glow,  
And learn to feel another's woe,  
And in his joy be blessed.

His ancestral towers will contain no dungeon or clanking  
chains, but instead

The open doors the needy bless,  
The unfriended hail their calm recess,  
And gladness smile around.

As ideals for the child, Beattie substitutes love of nature and  
rural simplicity. As admiring multitudes trace the patri-  
monial mien in the growing child, they will note "the liberal  
smile" and the warm heart. Although the child may live  
to win a nation's love, he must not despise

The village and the grove.

\*

For innocence with angel smile,  
Simplicity that knows no guile,  
And love and peace are there.

Beattie becomes so wrapped up in his vision of simple con-  
tentment that he forgets the child in the exaltation of the  
unselfish man, who alone is truly great. Though not dis-  
carded, the set imagery of traditional birthday verse is  
subordinated to the new material.

Francis Hoyland's *Ode* (1763?) likewise reveals the  
older poetic method coming into contact with the sentiment  
of the sixties. His lines still contain personification which  
stands in the way of direct observation of the child; but if  
"Zephyr" and "Poverty" are there, we find side by side with  
them unmistakable signs of personal expression. The *Ode*,  
which seems to have been addressed to his child under

pathetic circumstances of poverty, had the distinction of being re-issued from the Strawberry Hill press. Little is known of Hoyland's life beyond the fact of his poverty. It seems that he had enjoyed some favor, but that dependence galled him. He had received a fatal boon, and he wants no more of it. He prefers the honest frown, and in the words of his biographer, "like the country-mouse, wishes to be restored to his crust of bread and liberty."

The lines of welcome to his child, who from allusions to blackbirds was born probably in late winter, are worthy of high rank among poems about children. His love is simply expressed. Side glances to birds and flowers relieve emotional tension and enrich the theme. Although the sentimental note is not absent, Hoyland shows restraint, which, however, does not leave his reader cold.

And art thou come, ere Zephyr mild  
 Has waked the blackbird's vernal strain?  
 Alas! thou com'st, my beauteous child,  
 Where Poverty her iron reign  
 Extends, more bleak and cruel far  
 Than winter or the northern star:  
 Yet cease those cries, that all my pity move;  
 Though cold the hearth, my bosom burns with love:

Although he has enriched the passage by an image from nature, Lyttleton, in his lines in the *Monody in memory of Lady Lyttleton* (1747), echoes Hill's lines on his motherless little ones.

Sweet babes, who, like the little playful fawns,  
 Were wont to trip along these verdant lawns  
 By your delighted mother's side,  
 Who now your infant steps shall guide?  
 Ah! where is now the hand whose tender care  
 To every virtue would have formed your youth,  
 And strewed with flowers the thorny ways of truth?

John Scott, who in one year had lost not only his father, but also his child and wife, has unaffectedly memorialized his grief in *Amwell, in Hertfordshire* (1768). His wife was like a lovely flower "too fair for this rude clime"; she bore "one beauteous pledge," but "The fatal gift forbad the giver's stay":

In one sad spot, where kindred ashes lie,  
O'er wife, and child, and parents, closed the ground.

During the last quarter of the century the two most widely read poems of this class were Shaw's *Monody to the memory of Emma* (1768) and *Address to a Nightingale* (1771). The secret of their popularity lies in a sentimental abandon to frank revelation of personal grief and sorrow. Cuthbert Shaw, the improvident and temperamental son of a shoemaker, was at one time and another a tutor in literature to Chesterfield, an usher in a school at Darlington, hack writer for London newspapers, and an actor first in a traveling company and then at the Haymarket. He married above him in social rank, his wife renouncing friends and family for him. The seven poems addressed to her reveal Shaw's love and attachment. After the death of Emma upon the birth of her first child, he wrote the *Monody*, which poignantly expresses his grief. He will discard "pageantry of phrase": "Ill suit the flowers of speech with woes like mine." He asks friends to forbear telling him of her matchless virtues, which he knows too well. He hopes that the gush of tears from his welling heart may discharge his load of grief. Shaw wrote in the moments when he felt his loss most keenly. He sings her virtues in tearful lines that, of course, made a surer appeal during the sentimental sixties and after, than now when the reader prefers the poet's overflow of emotion recollected in tranquillity. A generation, however, that wept over *Clarissa* and *Julia* was



certain to be profoundly stirred by the dying Emma's appeal for the welfare of her child in the vision of a possible second wife's cruelty. Her homely appeal, "My dearest Shaw, forgive a woman's fears," is made dramatically effective by broken lines and pauses which reflect her tense emotion when she implores him to take her infant daughter to some remote spot where she may enjoy his parental love undisturbed.

The closing stanzas addressed to the infant left to share his woes, reflect the trembling sensibility characteristic of the poem. Shaw looks into the future. When the child is twining round his knees, his eyes will often fill with tears as he traces the mother's smiles and thinks of how the child was "Bought with a life yet dearer than thy own." Then he touches upon the motherless child motive:

Who now shall seek with fond delight  
Thy infant steps to guide aright?

The sentimental father is not satisfied to close his grief here, but must press on to the days when he will be ill and helpless.

Say, wilt thou drop the tender tear,  
Whilst on the mournful theme I dwell?  
Then, fondly stealing to thy father's side,  
Whene'er thou seest the soft distress,  
Which I would vainly seek to hide,  
Say, wilt thou strive to make it less?  
To soothe my sorrows, all thy cares employ,  
And in my cup of grief infuse one drop of joy?

This is, indeed, the very luxury of grief. The playgoers who had been surprised into sentimental tears in 1696 had long passed away. But another generation that wept over sentimental plays and novels welcomed such a poem as Shaw's because the poet was writing in the mood which was popular in drama and fiction.

Shaw again levies the "tribute of a tear" in the "sorrow-soothing strains" of the *Address to a Nightingale*, which three years later memorializes the death of Emma's child. The muse shall complain in piteous accents "And dwell with fond delay on blessings past." Imagery drawn from bird life accentuates the fast-growing popularity of new subject-matter which was finally to crowd out altogether the traditional set imagery. Shaw feels that the piteous notes which sadden all the groves must be prompted by a loss akin to his. Does the bird mourn a lost mate, or is she bereft of her darling young? The poet weeps for both. He has lost a bride in her youthful charms, but also "A lovely babe that should have lived to bless" his declining years. The child languished for a mother's aid, and winged its flight to seek her parent in the skies. No one is left to "soothe the anguish of an aching heart." Strangers who are far removed from his affections must fulfill the last sad office. Yet as long as he has life he will dwell fondly on "blessings past."

Although his sentimentalism is literary, Shaw can not be accused of the insincerity of Sterne. Shaw differs from Sterne in that his poems are motivated by personal grief. No matter how the modern reader may react to his literary method, two historical facts stand out; that his grief emphasized the personal point of view toward childhood, and that the deep impression he made upon his and the following generation prepared the way for a more sympathetic approach to childhood by accentuating emotional treatment.

During this period the boundaries of poetry were in fact extended to include a minuter and more specific interest in infants and nursery affairs. Poetry had lagged behind prose in notice of the mother's duties toward her child in such matters as nursing, diet, clothes, regulation of sleep. In

view of contemporary interest in the interminable poems on apple growing, raising the sugar cane, tilling the fields, and caring for sheep, one feels justified in the expectation of coming upon a poem dealing with the nurture of infants. Armstrong had in fact written a poem on health, in which, however, he had taken no notice of the needs of children. The general neglect is all the more surprising in view of the broad foundation Locke had laid in *Thoughts*, in which he discussed the minutest details of exercise, care and covering of the feet, clothes, diet, bedding, and sleep. Locke was widely read throughout the century, and Richardson must have had his Locke open before him while writing *Pamela* (1740). Richardson has Pamela discuss the duties of a mother to nurse her child. Publishers' announcements from 1728 to 1791 indicate that books on child nurture were in demand.<sup>1</sup>

Before Jerningham's *Il Latte* (1767), which treats at length of the mother's obligation to nurse her child, poets had not awakened to the needs of infants.<sup>2</sup> Jerningham is forward-looking in sentiment, although he employs the set imagery of earlier poetry. Amid allusions to Lucina's friendly aid, and fluttering Loves and Cupids, he couches an appeal for a consideration of the natural rights of the infant who "with artless eloquence" asks "The boon of

<sup>1</sup> The ever-widening interest in children finally prompted Hugh Downman, M. D., to write a poem called *Infancy*, which was published in two parts in 1774 and 1775. It is uninspired, and gives practical directions for the care of young children, in diction that is anything but poetic. Although the very favorable notices in the *Monthly Review* hail the author as a benefactor of childhood, the editor observes that "there are no vulgar mothers or vulgar nurses who can decipher the recipe for making what, we think, they call pap." Specimens are quoted in *Monthly Review*, Vol. LIII, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Compare, however, J. Warton's *Fashion*.



Nature, but asserts in vain." The mother's task is resigned to strangers "while Nature starts, and Hymen sheds a tear." While the mother seeks fantastic pleasure, the nursling lifts his voice, "his tears unnoticed, and unsoothed his pain." Like Beattie, Jerminham advocates the return to nature in the interest of the welfare of infants. Of what avail are "the splendid nursery, and the attendant train?" It would have been better had the infant first seen light in an obscure cottage, where he would have reposed securely in the "cradling arm" of a cottage mother.

Say why, illustrious daughters of the great,  
Lives not the nursling at your tender breast?

Although the problems surrounding childbirth were discussed in magazines, earlier poets of the century seem to have been content with references to Lucina's squalling hour or with colorless details in remote connections such as the birth of Apollo or Time.<sup>1</sup> There seems to have been slight inclination even throughout the middle decades of the century to approach the subject more closely than Langhorne, who calls upon man to contemplate his birth and "mortify his pride"; or he writes of man as "helpless born," one whom the "brute sagacious" might scornfully behold.<sup>2</sup> In the eighties, however, Mr. Ekins unaffectedly approaches

<sup>1</sup> Planetary influence, although it persists as a curious survival of traditional lore, is not vitally associated with childhood. Sir Walter Scott's radical change of plan in *Guy Mannering; or The Astrologer* indicates his belief that astrology was no longer familiar to readers. Yet Wordsworth wrote of fanes in which the moon was once worshipped by matrons who

yielding to rude faith  
In mysteries of birth and life and death  
And painful struggle and deliverance—prayed  
Of thee to visit them with lenient aid.

<sup>2</sup> Compare also Mason's *The Dean and the Squire*.



the subject in a poem *On the Birth of a First Child* (1783). Preoccupied as he is chiefly with the novel joys and duties of parenthood, he does not fail to notice details in the circumstances of motherhood that must precede a joy like his.<sup>1</sup>

Thomson had long before the sixties brought poverty and sentiment together, and indeed had focused them on childhood. Men like Hoyland and Shaw had tapped the reservoir of personal emotion in the development of themes from childhood. It remained for Burns to open the flood-gates, twenty years after Hoyland's *Ode*, in *A Poet's Welcome to his Love-begotten Daughter* (1784), with the subtitle "The first instance that entitled him to the venerable appellation of father." Hoyland and Shaw had already broken with classicist restraint that frowned upon the display of personal emotion as evidence of singularity, but Burns is a son of the Revolution in the rebellious bravado with which he faces an unfriendly world. Although he feels the irregularity of the child's birth, he is not disturbed by it. He will be a loving father "and brag the name o't." He will love her as the "Wee image o' my bonnie Betty." He gives her a fatherly kiss and sets her near his heart. Though she came unsought for, and the gossips will "tease" his name "in kintry clatter," she shall be "bienly clad" and well educated. He will not blush when she calls him "Tyta or daddie." His wishes are that she may inherit her "mither's person, grace, and merit" and her own worthless daddy's spirit, "without his failins." Johnson had given good classicist counsel in his dictum that "very few can boast of hearts which they dare lay open to themselves, and of which, by whatever accident exposed, they do not shun a

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Epitaph on Lady Lucy Meyrick who died in childhood*, by Dr. Peter Templeman.—In *A Classical Arrangement of Fugitive Poetry*, vol. XV (1797), *On the Birth of a First Child* is attributed to the Rev. Dr. Jeffry ("Late Dean of Carlisle").

distinct and continued view; and, certainly, what we hide from ourselves we do not show to our friends." Burns, however, shows the triumph of a different philosophy, and the complete emergence of romantic individuality.

Before Burns the theme of the expectant mother is noticed in vague platitudes.<sup>1</sup> Burns's treatment of the theme in two ballads that are associated with Jean Armour is symptomatic of the frank realism of the naturalistic school. In the home of the miller of Tarbolton, where Burns had found shelter for her after she had been disowned by friends and family, she recounts her loneliness, but is cheered by his gifts.<sup>2</sup> Winter will soon pass away, and Spring will brighten the birchwood. Then her "young baby will be born," and "he'll be hame that's far awa." *The Rantin Dog, the Dad-die O't* (1786) is a study of the lonely mother's fluctuations of emotion as she thinks ahead to her humiliating situation in the penance stool. Other fears press upon her. Will he help her name the child; will he show affection in her hour of trial; but above all, "wha my babie-clouts will buy?"<sup>3</sup>

In Burns the free play of personality almost wholly crowds out set imagery, which gives place to spontaneous treatment of childhood in his delightful complimentary poems *A Rose-Bud By My Early Walk* and *To Miss Cruickshank*, as well as in the humanitarian *On the Birth of a Posthumous Child*. These poems are far removed from

<sup>1</sup> Compare Beattie's *The Minstrel*, I, stanza 15 (at Edwin's birth),

The gossip's prayer for wealth, and wit, and worth.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bonie Lad That's Far Awa*.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the unmarried mother, see *The Unmarried Mother in German Literature*, by Oscar H. Werner (Columbia University Press).

the art of Prior in that they are written in the mood of a poet who knows nature intimately in country lanes and by-ways. Burns has substituted flowers and animals for classical mythology and conventions of polite London society. The child is made attractive through association with fresh imagery drawn from nature.

While suffering from a cold that confined him for some days to the house of Mr. William Cruickshank, a teacher in the high school at Edinburgh, Burns composed songs which Janet Cruickshank, his "sweet little Rose-bud," helped him set to music on her harpsichord. Two complimentary poems are the result of his sojourn in the Cruickshank household. In *A Rose-Bud By My Early Walk* (1787) the poet is definitely out of doors. He feels the freshness and glow of life in the fields as he breathes in the rich perfume of the rose, and observes

Within the bush her covered nest,  
A little linnet fondly pressed,

who will soon hear her brood among the "green leaves bedewed" waken the early morning with their song.

So thou, dear bird, young Jeany fair,  
On trembling string or vocal air,  
Shall sweetly pay the tender care  
That tents thy early morning.

So thou, sweet Rose-bud, young and gay,  
Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,  
And bless the parent's evening ray  
That watched thy early morning.

Like Prior, Burns is writing in a complimentary vein, but for the graces of a highly organized society Burns has employed natural beauty, and has addressed the child in terms of birds and flowers.



The identification of maiden and flower is complete in *To Miss Cruickshank* (1787). In spite of the phrases "Boreas' hoary path" and "Eurus' poisonous breath," which show a backward look to classicist material, the spontaneous nature imagery, which recognizes no cleavage between flower and child, places this effusion by the side of its companion poem as a charming manifestation of the new attitude in occasional verse on children.

*On the Birth of a Posthumous Child* (1790) retains the structural elements of early eighteenth-century occasional verse, but at the same time weaves in beautiful nature imagery with a dignity and appropriateness worthy of the poet's prayer for the welfare of the helpless orphan. Burns speaks with simple sincerity.

May he who gives the rain to pour,  
And wings the blast to blow,  
Protect thee frae the driving show'r,  
The bitter frost and snaw.

\*

Blest be thy bloom, thou lovely gem,  
Unscathed by ruffian hand.  
And from thee many a parent stem  
Arise to deck our land.

The charm of these poems, then, lies not in the increased willingness or power to observe the child as an individual, but in the substitution of nature imagery and humanitarian sentiment for classicist material.

There is also a vast difference of method between the early poetic use of set imagery and the free naturalistic observation of Blake. Watts's *A Cradle Hymn* (1719) characteristically treats the child as a kind of lay figure or bit of stage property. In Watts's lullaby, the mother's absorption in her narrative causes her to sing so vehemently that she awakens her child. She shows no inclination to



observe the child itself. Blake's *A Cradle Song*, on the other hand, depicts a mother who is sensitive to impressions of her sleeping infant. The reader is made to feel that she is watching over a living, breathing creature, and she draws spiritual suggestions from her baby's body. She lovingly traces soft desires and pretty infant wiles in her baby's face.

As thy softest limbs I feel,  
Smiles as of the morning steal  
O'er thy cheek and o'er thy breast  
Where thy little heart does rest.<sup>1</sup>

*On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture out of Norfolk* has been called the "most resplendent gem in Cowper's casket." The poem embodies that finality in sentiment and form which is essential to the creation of a classic. Cowper's poem, like those of preceding poets on the mother motive, is the expression of loving duty toward a parent whose memory he cherishes. Like them he contemplates her happy state in Heaven; but he enjoys the advantage of not being overwhelmed by an immediate sense of grief. Not the death of his mother, but her picture inspires him, so that he need not attempt to express an overflow of emotion, but may write with serenity. In the warm glow of recollection he awakens tender memories of his earliest childhood days. Through contemplation of his mother's picture, he has lived his childhood over again and has "renewed the joys that once were mine." His recollections of childhood companionship with his mother are suffused with tender regret.

Unlike Thomson and Langhorne, Cowper analyzes his childish thoughts and emotions. His imagery of childhood, conceived with the concreteness of Wordsworth, and ex-

<sup>1</sup> In *Poems from the Rossetti Manuscript*.

pressed with equal simplicity, carries the reader back to the poet's earliest years at the knees of his mother, or to

Where the gardener Robin, day by day,  
Drew me to school along the public way,  
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapped  
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped.

Or he gives intimate glimpses of life in the household:

Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,  
That thou mightest know me safe and warmly laid;  
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,  
The biscuits, or confectionary plum;  
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestowed  
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed.

No details are too lowly to be recalled with affection. The sentiment is throughout reduced to its true simplicity; there is no tendency toward rhetoric. The poem is written with a colloquial ease that never, even in an informal phrase like "mimic show of thee," disturbs the fine sincerity of the lines. The intimate details indicate how far poetry had developed, since the days of Prior and Pope, in the direction of easy personal revelation.

Wordsworth has several times by extended interpretation of details noticed the infant in the hour of its birth.<sup>1</sup> For the master poet of our study no phase of childhood is unworthy of exalted poetic interpretation. He looks upon natural joy over the birth of a child as a fit subject for poetic treatment, his imagery being in harmony with his temperamental high seriousness. In *To———* (*upon the birth of her first-born child, March, 1833*), Wordsworth's treatment follows much the same general outline as the poem of Ekins, but he has enriched it with imagery and suggestions of spiritual insight. A beautiful calm per-

<sup>1</sup> See *Michael* and *The Thorn*.

vades the lines, which join with the facts of direct observation a high philosophy of spiritual contentment and thanksgiving.

He considers the plight of the helpless babe who, "Flung by labouring nature forth," lies in "tenderest nakedness." From the "penalty" of the mother's throes that are now ended, there springs "more than mortal recompense" in the "blissful calm"

Known but to this one release.

The mother's silent thanks, that rise "incense-like" to Heaven, mingle also

With the gush of earthly love,  
As a debt to that frail Creature,  
Instrument of struggling Nature.

The troubles and pains of life which the child will experience are

Presignified by that dread strife  
Whence ye have escaped together.

But if the child follows the steps of her mother

She may look for serene weather;  
In all her trials sure to find  
Comfort for a faithful mind;  
Kindlier issues, holier rest,  
Than even now await her prest,  
Conscious Nursling, to thy breast.

In addition to his deep spiritual insight, Wordsworth often displays a matter-of-fact, almost scientific, faithfulness of observation. Luke slept for two days after his birth, "as oft befalls to new born infants." But as the poet contemplates his favorite daughter Dora at the age of one month, while she sleeps in "heedless peace," he is not disturbed by scientific doubts as to automatic muscular contractions. He notes that

Smiles are beginning, like the beams of dawn  
 To shoot and circulate, . . .  
 Tranquil assurance that Heaven supports  
 The feeble motions of thy life, and cheers  
 Thy loneliness: or shall those smiles be called  
 Feelers of love, put forth as if to explore  
 This untried world?

In the true mood of naturalism his thoughts turn to her  
 probable state had she been

of Indian birth  
 Couched on a casual bed of moss and leaves,  
 And rudely canopied by leafy boughs,  
 Or to the churlish elements exposed  
 On the bleak plains.

The closing stanzas of Dorothy's *The Mother's Return* (1807) reveal a sympathetic insight into the sudden changes and fleeting moods of early childhood. After hours of vigorous play there is a "momentary heaviness" of heart when the evening star calls to rest, but they run upstairs in "merry fit" and "gamesome race."

Five minutes past—and, O the change!  
 Asleep upon their beds they lie;  
 Their busy limbs in perfect rest,  
 And closed the sparkling eye.

Dorothy's *Holiday at Gwerndwffnant, May, 1826*, likewise shows her faithful observation of the almost instantaneous alertness of children upon awaking in the morning. After evening prayer

Theirs is one long, one steady sleep,  
 Till the sun, tip-toe on the steep  
 In front of our beloved cot,  
 Casts on the walls her brightest beams.  
 Within, a startling lustre streams.  
 They all awaken suddenly;  
 As at the touch of magic skill. . . .



In *The Excursion* (V) Wordsworth is subtle in his observation of the infant who, as he slowly awakens, stretches his limbs,

bemocking as might seem,  
The outward functions of intelligent man.

Wordsworth's *To H. C. (Six Years Old)* (1802) illustrates the change of poetic treatment that came with a fuller acceptance of the theory of natural rights and rights of the individual. Prior and Ambrose Philips looked upon children in the light of the doctrine of conformity. They thought of the child in terms of the belle, and Thomas Warton conceived the young prince in terms of the statesman.<sup>1</sup> In doing this they observed the fruition of the normal development the child was expected to follow. The civilization under whose protection they lived, depended for its existence on conformity by mutual consent. The career of the children who were subjects of their verse was predetermined by circumstances that had become fixed, and it was the natural expectation that children would fit into the groove into which they had been born.<sup>2</sup>

The romanticists, however, in so far as they were sons of the Revolution, and had felt the forces working for democracy, did not recognize the binding power of human institutions. They brushed aside the ideal of conformity and gave free play to individuality. It follows that Words-

<sup>1</sup> *On the Birth of the Prince of Wales* (1762).

<sup>2</sup> *On the Prince of Wales's Birth 1762* by William Henley Esq.:

Sleep, royal infant, sleep;  
Round thee may guardian powers their vigils keep.  
How little dost thou know,  
Whilst leaning on thy nurse's breast,  
Or in thy mother's arms carest,  
The high important toils 'tis thine to undergo!

worth can not forecast the future of the child with the same certainty as the earlier poets; the individual is inexplicable because the springs of life are obscure and because man, a law unto himself, is forever different from his fellows. Whatever the merits of such an attitude, for the child in poetry it had a two-fold advantage; first, that the poet looked upon the child as an individual worthy of profound attention and study; and secondly, it followed from this, that any manifestation of his individuality in mood or action was a fit subject for poetry.

Because he is interested in the child for what he is *now*—a fresh natural being—rather than for what he may become through training (compare *Emile*), Wordsworth in the presence of Hartley Coleridge is preoccupied with the problem of catching the secret of his individuality. But the fleeting moods of this faery voyager among men baffled direct analysis. Wordsworth therefore applies transcendental philosophy clothed in vague, skyey imagery. The child's fancies are brought from afar; he makes a mockery of words and fits to unutterable thoughts "The breeze-like motions and the self-born carol." He is a faery voyager whose boat seems less to float on earthly streams than to brood on air. The child's thought life is so ethereal that he lives as though

Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,  
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery.

Though the poet is sufficiently practical to fear for the future of such a child, he is attracted by the very excess of individuality which arouses his fears:

O blessed vision! happy child!  
Thou art so exquisitely wild.

Hartley is so delicately constituted as to be unfitted for the unkind shocks and soiling tasks of life. He is "a dew-drop, which the morn brings forth," that "glitters while it lives,"

But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife  
Slips in a moment out of life.

As the poet looks into the future, he feels that nature will be good to the child by taking him off before worldly matters bring grief and melancholy that he can not endure; or nature will keep him a child always and preserve him

by individual right,  
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks.

Thought and imagery are here in sharp contrast to the clearly defined outlines of Prior. Though Wordsworth's analysis is evanescent in effect, and though he at times seems to destroy physical reality in attempting to interpret the child's personality, we know from Coleridge's account that Hartley was an unusual if not abnormal child. Wordsworth was not fantastic, but had his eye on the child. This is evident from Coleridge's own remarks:

Hartley is a spirit that dances on an aspen leaf; the air that yonder sallow-faced and yawning tourist is breathing, is to my babe a perpetual nitrous oxide. Never was more joyous creature born. Pain with him is so wholly trans-substantiated by the joys that had rolled on before, and rushed on after, that oftentimes five minutes after his mother has whipt him he has gone up and asked her to whip him again.

Wordsworth was fascinated by the unusual personality revealed in this child, and in so far as it was possible with the poetic treatment congenial to him, he has given a true interpretation of Hartley Coleridge at the age of six. He took no external standards for granted, but looked upon the child as an individual worthy of individual treatment on the basis of laws of conduct revealed in the child itself.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GROWING BOY

In my poor mind it is most sweet to muse  
Upon the days gone by; to act in thought  
Past seasons o'er, and be again a child;  
To sit in fancy on the turf-clad slope  
Down which the child would roll; to pluck gay flowers,  
Make posies in the sun, which the child's hand  
(Childhood offended soon, soon reconciled)  
Would throw away, and straight take up again,  
Then fling them to the winds, and o'er the lawn  
Bound with so playful and so light a foot,  
That the pressed daisy scarce declined her head.

*Childhood*: Charles Lamb.

Children who appear in lines on play are usually beyond the nursery age; they are old enough to be out of doors, and to enjoy more vigorous pastimes. In *Going into Breeches*, Charles Lamb has caught the boisterous spirit and greater freedom which mark the transition from indoor games to outdoor play.

Puss in Corners, Hide and Seek,  
Sports for girls and punies weak.  
Baste the bear he now may play at,  
Leap-frog, Foot-ball, sport away at,  
Show his skill and strength at Cricket,  
Mark his distance, pitch his wicket,  
Run about in winter's snow  
Till his cheeks and fingers glow,  
Climb a tree or scale a wall  
Without any fear to fall.

The early poets, however, in their passing notice of children, did not phrase an equally lively appreciation of the ac-



tivities of the growing boy. In classicist poetry the earliest reference to children in the fields associates them with flowers; but had John Philipps in *Cyder* shown a vital sympathy with children at play, the phrasing of such an interest would have been exceptional. The early poets, in the main town poets, were committed to a consideration of manners at the center of fashion. With few exceptions, evidence of interest in outdoor play appears incidentally. Often the general subject is close to childhood, as in Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* or Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*. The poet occasionally focused his attention on outdoor play in such poems as Hoyland's *Guardian Angel*, Bruce's *Lochleven*, Scott's *Childhood*, Lovibond's *Combe Neville*, and White's *Childhood*. Incidental notice ordinarily implies a generalized conception; but when the personal element emerges, after the middle of the century, it is usually accompanied by specific details that localize and individualize the experience.

The change from Thomson's impersonal attitude to Wordsworth's extended autobiographical recollection is gradual. The personal element is dependent for effective realization upon the poet's willingness to phrase specific details. The difference between this and generalized description will be noted in connection with play in fields and by the side of streams. The full emergence of the personal element, which came with the growth of sentiment, will be observed in connection with the play of schoolboys and the poet's fond recollection of native fields.

## I

From the days of Thomson, children are increasingly observed in fields and woods. Their roving habits often carried them away from the home plot and village green. To

be under the eye of parents, they were frequently taken into the harvest field to help in gleaning. [Children assisting at harvest were portrayed at first as miniature harvesters—little workers thought of in terms of their elders. As soon as poets became more familiar with the details of external nature, and as their growing sympathy with childhood awakened them to a realization that children are individuals, poetry reflected those details which differentiate boys and girls from their elders. Children are no longer merely at work, but are tempted in child fashion by berries at the roadside or near the hedge.

In a typically conceived description of hay-making in *Summer*, Thomson notes how

Infant bands

Trail the long rake, or, with the fragrant load  
O'ercharged, amid the kind oppression roll.

Activity in which children must certainly have taken part is suggested without specifically connecting with them the "blended voice" that was "heard from dale to dale." In *Amwell*, Scott is equally general in his lines on the annual recurrence of

The shouts of harvest, and the prattling train  
Of cheerful gleaners.

Little advance is shown by Wordsworth in a late sonnet ("Intent on gathering wool from hedge and brake") in which he notices unaccompanied children. They work gleefully in expectation that a "poor old Dame" will bless them for their gift. Closer observation is revealed in the early sonnet "Sweet was the walk along the narrow lane" (1792, or earlier), in which childhood traits are sympathetically noticed. The children accompanied their elders, who were gleaning tufts of hay caught by a hawthorn hedge from the

loaded wagon as it passed down the lane. While seeming to be even busier than their elders in plying the "little rake," they at the same time "with cunning sidelong look" sauntered to "pluck the strawberries wild unseen." Wordsworth has more than once associated children with strawberries. In another passage, in *Epistle to Beaumont* (1811), he notes that the strawberries he enjoyed at an early-morning breakfast in the lowly grange in Yewdale had been gathered from lane and woodside. Poured in hillocks, they were the "offering wild of children's industry."

The story of children in field and wood is not complete without mention of berrypicking and nutting expeditions. These are part of the unpublished seasonal schedule of childhood pastimes. As was to be expected, earlier poets are concerned with practical considerations.<sup>1</sup> Poems on subjects of husbandry, like *The Hop-Garden*, *The Fleece*, or *The Sugarcane*, reveal a matter-of-fact attitude that is very different from the personal point of view of more inspired moralists like Cowper and Wordsworth. When, in *Agriculture*, Dodsley notices the problem of children wandering in the fields, he is preoccupied with the dangers that beset the hungry child who is tempted to taste of the "alluring fruit" of the deadly nightshade. As a matter of fact, the poet is reading a lecture to farmers on the dangers of ill-weeded and unkept fields. He does not spare realistic details of the various steps that lead up to the hideous death of the child who has unwarily eaten poisonous berries. The

<sup>1</sup> This attitude persists in later poetry. In *The Oak and the Broom* (1800), as Wordsworth contemplates the broom precariously growing in a fissure of rock, he fears for the little witless shepherd boy who may be tempted some sultry noon to slumber in the branches of this lightly-rooted tree. Cowper has the "little ones" from the village gather kingcups and daisies, but also a cheap and wholesome salad from the brook (*The Task*, VI).



passage closes with an apostrophe to Providence, which has concealed poison in a form so tempting. Dodsley can not understand why this bane should be allowed to grow "so near the path of innocents." Numerous passages show that nightshade seems to have been especially feared. Scott in *Rural Scenery* calls upon shepherds to warn children (who roam "beside the public way") against the pernicious plants that spring from rank soils, and especially against the deadly juice with which the "nightshade's berry swells." In *Rural Business* he is less sombre when giving harvest counsel which is timed by reference to the season when bramble berries change from red to black,

And boys for nuts the hazel copses range.

In his lines *To Contemplation*, White shows an attempt to individualize. He loves to listen to

the little peasant's song,  
Wandering lone the glens among,  
His artless lip with berries dyed,  
And feet through ragged shoes descried.

At an earlier date, the personal element appears in Hoyland's lines to his guardian angel ("Sweet angel of my natal hour"), one of the tenderest poems of the century. He recalls how he was led by "simple Nature" and was guarded from harm:

'Twas thou, whene'er I ranged the mead,  
That drew me from the pois'nous weed  
Of tempting purple dye;  
That drew me from the fatal brake,  
Where, coiled in speckled pride, the snake  
Allured my longing eye.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Day's *Sandford and Mertoun* contains a snake episode very much like that developed in Mary Lamb's unconvincing *The Boy and the Snake* (in which little Henry shares his breakfast with a snake which he calls familiarly "Grey Pate.")



The personal note is clearly heard also in one of Cow-per's finest autobiographical passages in *The Task*:

E'er since, a truant boy, I passed my bounds,  
To enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames;  
And still remember, nor without regret,  
Of hours that sorrow since has much endeared,  
How oft, my slice of pocket-store consumed,  
Still hungering, pennyless, and far from home,  
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,  
Or blushing crabs, or berries that emboss  
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere.  
Hard fare! but such as boyish appetite  
Disdains not, nor the palate, undepraved  
By culinary art, unsavoury deems.

In the autobiographical poem (*Nutting*, 1799) which records a destructive visit to hazel coppices near Lake Esthwaite, Wordsworth recalls one day singled out from many, "One of those heavenly days that cannot die." He pictures the boy with "huge wallet" slung over his shoulders, a nutting crook in hand, and dressed in ragged clothes saved by frugal Dame Tyson against the time when he would encounter thorns and brambles. In lines which vigorously respond to his recollection of having "dragged to earth both branch and bough" he bears witness to that rough and unfeeling nature which is traditionally associated with boys of a certain age.

The same change from early-century incidental and generalized notice to late-century personal recollection or individualization may be observed in other phases of the growing boy's outdoor activities. In *Summer*, Thomson's passage on sheep shearing merely notices

The clamour much of men, and boys, and dogs,

and glances aside to the sturdy boy "glorying in his might" as he holds the indignant ram by its "twisted horns." In his *Sugarcane* Grainger flattens out this incident by reference to the "infant throng" who "proud of their prowess" attempt to hold the "struggling ram." In his *Fleece*, Dyer fails to visualize children who were present at the sheep-shearing festival of sprinkling the rivers with flowers, in fact does not bring them into his picture beyond noting that "their little ones look on delighted." Sentiment colors Scott's treatment. The beauty of the flowers which his swain plucks for Delia is enhanced because he gathers them during the evening hours when village children stray in the green meadows. More romantic also is Cowper's ideal of freedom (*Retirement*), which finds perfect expression in the shepherd boy who unfolds his flock at the first breeze of dawn when glittering dew-drops are on the thorn. The boy unconsciously enjoys the essence of freedom while he sits under bank or bush, linking cherry stones or plaiting rushes. Do not ask him how fair freedom is—he has never known another state. In carefree mood he carves his "rustic name" upon a tree.

Wordsworth's shepherd boys are vitally conceived. They are less placid than earlier poetic children, and also more mischievous. In Luke, who caught at the legs of sheep, and "with shouts scared them" while they were under the shears, or who stood at the gate in the fields "something between a hindrance and a help," may be observed a child who is far removed from the theoretical children of the earlier poets. In *The Idle Shepherd-Boys; or, Dungeon-Ghyll Force, a Pastoral* (1800), Wordsworth gives lively glimpses of the changing moods of careless boys who neglect duty for play. They are sitting beneath a rock,

Their work, if any work they have,  
Is out of mind—or done.

On whistles fashioned from branches of a sycamore tree they are playing snatches from a Christmas hymn. As a livelier mood overtakes them they run a race for one of the whistles as a prize. In the midst of the race one dares the other to follow him on a natural bridge of rock over the chasm made by the waterfall. The challenger, "all eyes and feet," with staff in hand as a balance, is half way across when he hears the bleat of a lamb that had washed over the waterfall into the pool beneath. At this moment the poet appears and assists them in extricating the swirling lamb, but not without gentle admonishment to "better mind their trade."

Children at play by river and stream have been noticed repeatedly. The range is from merely incidental notice to extended observation. They may be gathering flowers on the bankside, or may be at play in the water or upon it. Although poets usually prefer to emphasize the happiness of children, play by the water does not always have a happy ending, and poets have not been slow, especially in ballads and narrative poems, to employ the pathetic incident of a drowned child.<sup>1</sup>

In *Summer*, Thomson has described with more than customary detail a youthful swimmer who is enjoying a bath in a favorite swimming hole which shows a sandy bottom.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Lamb has developed this motive in *To a River in Which a Child was Drowned*. Compare also the kidnapping scene in Wilkie's *Epigoniad*, where the child's curiosity leads to his capture. See also *Petherton Bridge, An Elegy, inscribed to the Rev. Mr. Bean, by Mr. Gerrard* (in *The Lady's Poetical Magazine or Beauties of British Poetry*. London, 1781).



Awhile he stands  
Gazing the inverted landscape, half afraid  
To meditate the blue profound below;  
Then plunges headlong down the circling flood.  
His ebon tresses and his rosy cheek  
Instant emerge; and through the obedient wave,  
At each short breathing by his lip repelled,  
With arms and legs according well, he makes  
As humour leads, an easy-winding path;  
While, from his polished sides, a dewy light  
Effuses on the pleased spectators round.

Thomson enjoyed his description. His enthusiasm, perhaps stimulated by recollection of his boyhood feats in the Scottish Tweed, leads him into an encomium on swimming, which, he believes, not only exhilarates the body but knits the limbs. The mind too receives a sympathetic toning up from the glow of life in the body. His faith in the efficacy of winter baths in the open shows that he was a cold-water enthusiast, and believed with Locke in hardening the child's body. He finally takes shelter in an historical parallel. The mighty Roman arm that conquered the world had learned "while tender, to subdue the wave."

Blair shows originality by bringing the "children gathering flowers" motive into connection with a youngster at play by the side of a rivulet. The episode is included within the limits of a similitude, which is extended, however, to nine blank verse lines. In spite of its sombre mood and bald moralizing, Blair's *Grave* (1743) is nevertheless for the lover of children one of the most rewarding of earlier poems. Blair seems to look upon childhood as a rich mine of illustrations. In his lines on the irresolute youngster, the faithful details reveal a lively and half-amused interest. The boy has been attracted by flowers on the opposite bank. Poetic diction hardly obscures Blair's sympathetic observation in the line which introduces the growing fear of the



boy: "How wishfully he looks to stem the tide." His analysis of the fluctuating resolve, until the boy dips his foot into the water, after which his fears are redoubled, so that he runs off unmindful of the flowers on the farther bank, is done with care for details.<sup>1</sup>

Gray's lines on swimming in the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* are generalized. His muse led him to wonder what Eton boys were now bathing in Thames.

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen  
 Full many a sprightly race  
 Disporting on thy margent green  
 The paths of pleasure trace,  
 Who foremost now delight to cleave  
 With pliant arm thy glassy wave?

In *Leven-Water*, even the author of *Peregrine Pickle* could wax sentimental over the "pure stream" in whose "transparent wave" he had bathed his youthful limbs. In *Auld Lang Syne* Burns recalls how

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,  
 Frae morning sun till dine.

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth is likewise more personal than Gray in his recollection of how he had made "one long bathing of a summer's day" in the Derwent, which flowed at the foot of his father's garden. He has painstakingly localized the experience.

the bright blue river passed  
 Along the margin of our terrace walk;  
 A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.  
 Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,

<sup>1</sup> Compare *The Stepping-Stones*. Wordsworth does not develop the situation beyond the lines,

Here the Child  
 Puts, when the high-swoln Flood runs fierce and wild,  
 His budding courage to the proof.

In a small mill-race severed from his stream,  
Made one long bathing of a summer's day;  
Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again  
Alternate, all a summer's day. . . . (Book I)

In *Winter*, Thomson has given a composite picture of tobogganing and skating scenes that are international in their subject-matter. He has not overlooked the "happiest of all the train," who is none other than the "raptured boy" lashing his whirling top. He is not individualized farther than that. In *Vicissitude*, Mickle notes a boy who returns at night from "his day-sport on the ice-bound stream." Wordsworth, on the other hand, is specific and individual in his skating scene, even to the precise statement of the hour when Hawkeshead boys began the game of hunt the hare, and caused an uproar that was echoed by the precipices. They spread their coats to the wind and scudded down the lake. Wordsworth's lines are suggestive of the keen frosty air and the sense of bodily strength and animal vigor which made these boys wheel about exultingly like an untired horse that cares not for its home. It was a tumultuous throng that hissed along the ice. Although the youthful Wordsworth often left the uproar to skate by himself in a quiet bay or to cut across the reflection of a star, and although he reports one unusual experience when he stopped so suddenly while in full career that the cliffs were moving past him as though he beheld the visible motions of the earth, yet the passage, more than any other that is descriptive of his adventures in field and on mountain, depends on sense impression for its effect. The gleam is there, but it is subordinated to a keen sense of boyish delight in animal motions. Natural phenomena of winter impressed themselves upon this sensitive boy even while he was enjoying a game of loo or whist in Dame Tyson's cottage; the game was often interrupted by splitting fields of ice on Esthwaite

when the pent-up air in freeing itself made "loud protracted yelling" like howling wolves.

## II

Some of the most exhilarating lines in the early poems picture the delight of children just out of school. To illustrate the mad scamper of the freed pack from the kennel, Somerville in *The Chase* refers in an epic simile to boys who rush from school and "give a loose to all their frolic play." In *The Schoolmistress*, Shenstone's schoolboy, his task done, ran forth with "jocund sprite" to freedom and to joy. Somerville's enthusiasm for the chase rises so high that everyone leaves his occupation at the huntsman's call, even to the schoolboy who does not heed his master, but flies from his prison. Mason makes his point in political verses by comparing unfaithful legislators who have "quit St. Stephen's dome" to truant schoolboys roaming with hound and horn. In *Syr Martyn*, Mickle rounds out the picture of youthful truants, who probably came honestly by their British love of outdoor sport. Mickle's youngster is standing on a "green bank," in his hands an "ashen rod" which obeys his guileful hands. He leads the mimic fly across the way of a wary trout. He succeeds in hooking his quarry, evidently to the admiration of the poet, who finally enters into the situation with enthusiasm. This is reflected in the minute details which bear witness to the skill of the young fisherman, who showed himself precocious at fly casting if not at his books.

Late in the century Bampfylde inclines to specific details while quaintly visualizing

the boisterous string  
Of school-imps, freed from dame's all dreaded sight,  
Round the village cross, in many a wanton ring.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *To the Evening.*



Mary Lamb's detached poem *The Journey from School and to School* tries to catch the spirit of youngsters "jumbled all together" in a coach:

Sometimes we laugh aloud aloud,  
 Sometimes huzzah, huzzah,  
 Who is so buoyant, free, and proud,  
 As we home-travelers are?

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth recalls the "noisy crew" at Hawkeshead with their "round of tumult." They were "mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds." It was a "race of real children" who were "bandied up and down by love and hate." In *The Excursion* he carries on the traditional figure of unwilling inmates of the schoolroom and their glad release. The boys of the parsonage were

A few short hours of each returning day  
 The thriving prisoners of the village school:  
 And thence let loose, to seek their pleasant homes  
 Or range the grassy lawn in vacancy.

The open space known as the village green, which often was adjacent to the highway, may be looked upon as the eighteenth-century public playground for children. In *The Schoolmistress*, when "Liberty" has unbarred her prison door, children run pell-mell from school,

And now the grassy cirque had covered o'er  
 With boisterous revel-rout and wild uproar;  
 A thousand ways in wanton rings they run.  
 \*  
 See in each sprite some various bent appear.  
 These rudely carol most incondite lay;  
 Those sauntering on the green, with jocund leer  
 Salute the stranger passing on his way;  
 Some builden fragile tenements of clay;  
 Some to the standing lake their courses bend,  
 With pebbles smooth at duck and drake to play.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is a pity that the realistically conceived passages of Shenstone, West, and Mickle are hobbled with Spenserian archaisms. These poets were, of course, writing in the satirical tradition; but they did observe childhood with more than customary sympathy.



The generalized observation of children at play and in mischief on city streets or on the highway goes back as far at least as Swift. Merciless in the exposure of sham and vanity, he delighted to think of children who in chorus heap ridicule upon a pompous person. Shenstone noted how youngsters out of school mockingly salute passers-by. Soame Jenyns took up the theme in *The American Coachman*, where the horses become unmanageable and run away. In a few well chosen phrases he enters into the spirit of the boys who enjoy the excitement, and by bawling of "Stop them! Stop them! till they're hoarse" mean only to make the horses run faster. This phase of children's activities is probably best known from Cowper's incidental lines in *John Gilpin*. Here, again, dogs bark, children scream, and everyone bawls out "well done" as poor Gilpin gallops helplessly down the street.<sup>1</sup> The satirical tradition is carried on in Chatterton's *Resignation* where

A lengthening train of boys displayed him great,  
He seemed already minister of state.

Chatterton asks in the *Epistle to the Rev. Mr. Catcott* (1769),

What pattern of humility and truth  
Can bear the jeering ridicule of youth?

In *Kew Gardens* he alludes to the motive in a similitude:

Your infant muse should sport with other toys,  
Man will not bear the ridicule of boys.

In the same poem he ridicules the officers of trainbands who are stirred to action "When some bold urchin beats his drum in sport."

<sup>1</sup> Compare Cowper's letter (Edition Wright, Vol. III, page 59): "My brother drove up and down Olney in quest of us, almost as often as you up and down Chancery Lane in quest of the Madans, with fifty boys and girls at his tail, before he could find us."

Crabbe and Wordsworth modify the theme to suit special situations such as a village burial or celebration of victory. In this instance as in others that have to do with children at play or their life in the nursery, the close observation of the satirists has been carried over by later poets into their dominant mood of respect and reverence. The motive still heightens effect, but the poet's intention is no longer satirical. Crabbe sees idle children who, while wandering about a newly-made grave, take on the "tone of woe." In *The Village* (1783), children suspend play "To see the bier that bears their ancient friend." He had been one with them in all their idle sports, had formed the "pliant bow," the "flying ball," and had also constructed a bat and wicket for them. Wordsworth was stirred by the possibility of a Napoleonic invasion. His thoughts were absorbed by the danger which threatened his beloved England. Included in the sonnets dedicated to National Independence and Liberty is *Anticipation*, which celebrates an expected victory over Napoleon on British ground. The poet calls on old men to come forth and on wives to make merry; but the accompaniment of childish noises is not overlooked, even to those of infants in arms.

ye little children, stun

Your grandame's ears with pleasure of your noise!

Clap, infants, clap your hands!

Curiously enough, the most detailed late-century account of games on the green occurs in *Childhood* of the gloom-ridden White. When the dame's school had been dismissed, the dame sat spinning before her cottage, and "o'er her spectacles would often peer" to watch the gambols of her scholars.

What clamorous throngs, what happy groups were seen,  
In various postures scattering o'er the green.  
Some shoot the marble, others join the chase  
Of self-made stag, or run the emulous race;

While others, seated on the dappled grass,  
 With doleful tales the light-winged minutes pass.  
 Well I remember how, with gesture starched,  
 A band of soldiers oft with pride we marched;  
 For banners, to a tall ash we did bind  
 Our handkerchiefs, flapping to the whistling wind;  
 And for our warlike arms we sought the mead,  
 And guns and spears we made of brittle reed;  
 Then, in uncouth array, our feats to crown,  
 We stormed some ruined pigstye for a town.

Wordsworth pictures an equally wholesome afternoon's sport on a bowling green picturesquely laid out on the garden slope above the Lion Inn on Lake Windermere. Boys from Hawkeshead had to walk to the western shore of the lake, and then row across to the inn.

There, while through half an afternoon we played  
 On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed  
 Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee  
 Made all the mountains ring.

Sentiment often colours side glances to play. In *Pollio* (1762), Mickle feels in harmony with his surroundings on a peaceful evening while "playful schoolboys wanton o'er the green." In *Lochleven* Bruce draws an idyllic picture of a happy valley in which, for once, girls with golden hair trip nimble-footed on the green, and wanton in their play with "blooming boys." Grandsires of the village sit in "reverend row" in the sunshine before the gate, and shake their "aged locks with joy" while they recall "well remembered stories of their youth."<sup>1</sup> In Blake's *Nurse's Song*

<sup>1</sup> Compare *The Deserted Village*:

The young contending as the old surveyed.  
 Mr. Hudson's *Ode to Fancy* gives a picture of dancing swains and damsels:

The simple notes, and merry gambols fire  
 (Placed by the hawthorne-hedge) each ancient sire.



the heart of the poet is made glad by the sounds of children at play on the green. In their reply to the nurse's suggestion that the sun has gone down and it is time to stop play, the words of the children suggest a typically English pastoral background:

in the sky the little birds fly,  
And the hills are all covered with sheep.

The sentimental note is heard as soon as the poet recollects his own early play. In this mood the generalized interest in happy children tends to give way to a keen realization of the difference between the cares and sorrows of manhood and the undisturbed happiness of childhood.

Although Gray feels a "momentary bliss" as he thinks of schoolboy play at Eton, his recollections induce melancholy musings. The "little victims" at play in the years when ignorance is bliss are "regardless of their doom." Unlike the hardier truants of Somerville and Mickel, they snatch a fearful joy outside the bounds set by school authorities.

Some bold adventurers disdain  
The limits of their little reign,  
And unknown regions dare descry;  
Still as they run they look behind,  
They hear a voice in every wind,  
And snatch a fearful joy.

Within bounds the "idle progeny" chase the "rolling circle's speed" or "urge the flying ball." The play of these schoolboys may have been in fact "redolent of joy and youth," but Gray's melancholy lines do not call to mind lively, scampering children. They may have quarreled and have forgotten their tears "as soon as shed," but the sombre muse of the poet hardly allows him to enter into sports as tame as those recorded. It is perhaps unjust to say that the lines are frigid, but the glow, if indeed it is reflected at all, is cer-



tainly dull. The muse of Gray did not find congenial matter in the coarser pleasures and glad animal spirits of children. Their activities are sicklied o'er with a pale cast of thought.<sup>1</sup>

Yet in his contemplation of lawns and flowerets, the thought of children tripping lightly over them came to Gray with such peculiar grace that he has written what is probably the most poetic line on childhood in the eighteenth century. It occurs in the "redbreast" stanza, which was first printed just ahead of the epitaph in the third edition of the *Elegy*. Unfortunately it was later canceled, for Gray has written opposite the stanza in the Pembroke MS., "Omitted, 1753."

There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,  
By hands unseen, are showers of violets found;  
The red-breast loves to build, and warble there,  
And little footsteps lightly print the ground.<sup>2</sup>

Although Scott's lyric *To Childhood* is more vivacious, it also is motivated by the belief that "ignorance is bliss." Scott and Gray do not link childhood and manhood. In their conception, children are carefree because they do not realize what life has in store for them; they are ignorant of the ills of fortune which come with manhood. Neither Gray nor Scott looks upon play as a preparation for life. Gray is moved to melancholy, and writes in the mood of the graveyard poets. Although Scott is not sombre, he too is moved to sadness over what has been irrevocably lost.

<sup>1</sup> Contrast Thomson's lively boy (*Castle of Indolence*, Canto I, Stanza XXV):

The lad leaped lightly at his master's call:  
He was, to weet, a little roguish page,  
Save sleep and play, who minded naught at all.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Martial's lines on the little girl Erotion (Horace Scudder, *Childhood in Literature and Art*).

Childhood! happiest stage of life,  
 Free from care and free from strife,  
 Free from Memory's ruthless reign,  
 Fraught with scenes of former pain;  
 Free from Fancy's cruel skill,  
 Fabricating future ill;  
 Time, when all that meets the view,  
 All can charm, for all is new;  
 How thy long-lost hours I mourn,  
 Never, never to return!

Then to toss the circling ball,  
 Caught rebounding from the wall;  
 Then the mimic ship to guide  
 Down the kennel's dirty tide;  
 Then the hoop's revolving pace  
 Through the dusty street to chase;  
 O what joy—it once was mine,  
 Childhood, matchless boon of thine!  
 How thy long-lost hours I mourn,  
 Never, never to return!

At the close of the century White also recognizes a break in continuity, and mourns the loss in *Childhood*.

Sweet reign of innocence, when no crime defiles,  
 But each new object brings attendant smiles;  
 When future evils never haunt the sight,  
 But all is pregnant with unmixed delight.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Shenstone's conception in *Economy*:

O lovely source  
 Of generous foibles, youth! when opening minds  
 Are honest as the light, lucid as air,  
 As fostering breezes kind, as linnets gay,  
 Tender as buds, and lavish as the Spring!

Childhood is here the source of manhood; it is not a separate unit of existence. In his *Schoolmistress* he definitely recognizes continuity of development in the lines on a youthful bench of bishops. Wordsworth was familiar with the poem.

In "Sweet angel of my natal hour" Hoyland likewise is saddened by the dominance of cold reason in manhood; but his closing stanza seems to suggest the possibility of a return to the happiness of childhood days.

Come then, resume thy guardian pow'r,  
Sweet angel of my natal hour,  
    To whom the charge was given!  
Once more receive me to thy care,  
For ever kind, for ever near,  
    If such the will of Heaven.

Lovibond's *On Rebuilding Combe Neville* recognizes continuity of development from the child's play to the man's activities. As a schoolboy at Kingston, Lovibond often availed himself of the rich heritage of British schoolboys—who, wherever their school may be situated, are certain to be within walking distance of an abbey, cathedral, or castle—and roamed within the precincts of "Neville's ancient halls."

Loved seat, how oft, in childish ease,  
    Along thy woods I strayed,  
Now venturous climbed embowering trees,  
    Now sported in their shade.  
  
Now, languid with the noontide beams,  
    Explored thy precious springs. . . .

He regrets the "improvements" that are destroying the favorite spot of his outdoor play, and touches lightly on the loss of the carefree spirit of his early days.

Along thy hills the chase I led  
    With echoing hounds and horns,  
And left for thee my downy bed,  
    Unplanted yet with thorns.

Although his recollections are generalized, the poem contains a far-away suggestion of Wordsworth's backward look

that exalts play hours as a valuable part of a boy's education. He seems to believe that the dreams of his boyhood fashioned his manhood.

Each smiling joy was there, that springs  
In life's delicious prime;  
There young Ambition plumed his wings,  
And mocked the flight of Time.

There patriot passions fired my breast  
With Freedom's glowing themes,  
And Virtue's image rose confessed  
In bright Platonic dreams.

Mickle definitely conceives of play as a factor in moulding character. His *Epitaph on General Wolfe* (1759?) strikes a modern note in the desire to direct a child's activities by guiding his play instincts.

Briton, approach with awe this sacred shrine,  
And if the Father's sacred name be thine,  
If thou hast marked thy stripling's cheeks to glow  
When war was mentioned, or the Gallic foe,  
If shining arms his infant sports employ,  
And warm his rage—Here bring the warlike boy,  
Here let him stand, whilst thou enrapt shalt tell  
How fought the glorious Wolfe, how glorious fell.  
Then when thou mark'st his bursting ardour rise,  
Catch his young hand.

In Bruce and Beattie, interest in genetics is unmistakably reflected. Bruce, whose love of remote valleys and romantic glens is symptomatic of a coming master like Wordsworth, has Lavina leave her schoolmates at their play in order to roam in search of "curious flower" or "nest of bird unknown." In this way she learned to love wild flowers. An early sister of the nature-loving children of Wordsworth, Lavina thus revealed in her youth ("the index of maturer years") a romantic love of nature in solitary haunts. In



tracing the child's play in *Lochleven*, Bruce is aware of its influence on character. Beattie, whose intention in *The Minstrel* is to trace the growth of a minstrel from childhood, notes similar traits in Edwin.

Concourse, and noise, and toil he ever fled;  
Nor cared to mingle in the clamorous fray  
Of squabbling imps; but to the forest sped  
Or roamed at large the lonely mountain head,  
Or, where the maze of some bewildered stream  
To deep untrodden groves his footsteps led. . . .

English schoolboys generally, it is evident from sentimental poetry, did not love birds and flowers in the mood of Lavina and Edwin. Marauding truants rouse the sentimental poet's indignation. In *The Blackbirds* (1753) Jago offers to take the bird's nest into the thickest brake "imperious to the schoolboy's eye." In *The Goldfinches* (1735) he vents his wrath on the "ungentlest of his tribe," a truant who had despoiled the nest of its brood. The indignant poet accounts for the truant's lack of fine feeling by reference to his school exercises, which reveal no sense for harmony: he blunders over his scrawl, which is characterized by "hideous prosody" and "concord false." There seems to have been need of an Audubon society in the sentimental decades of the eighteenth century, for in *The Linnet* Graeme notices how the bird had built her nest where "no savage boy" could find it, and later how the mother linnet's song did not protect her against "The schoolboy's lawless stone."

Cowper's experiences at school, and his later humanitarian interests, precluded sympathy with outdoor sports even of the shepherd boy who, while his flocks are peacefully grazing, "snares the mole" or with "ill-fashioned hook" draws the "incautious minnow" from the streamlet. The colorless lines in themselves give evidence not only of Cow-

per's lack of sympathy with such pastimes, but also of his inability to enter into the spirit of the boy whose rustic simplicity otherwise appeals to him. Cowper takes every opportunity to condemn all forms of sport that have as their object the killing of animals.

Wordsworth, who especially in *The Prelude* looks on play in fields and woods as an educational force in moulding character, wrote with equal fervor in defense of hunted animals, but was sturdy Englishman enough to remember with enthusiasm the joys of fishing he had experienced while a schoolboy at Hawkeshead. He records with "no reluctant voice" how he and his mates followed

the rod and line,  
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong  
And unproved enchantment led us on  
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,  
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades  
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks. (I, 485-490)

In comparison with earlier poets, he gains power in proportion to his ability to infuse into the recollection of his early experience something of the natural magic of the mountain background into which by a subtle transformation he merges his simple adventures. His genius interfused with the bare statements of narrative a transcendental interpretation that in this instance tends to obscure the outlines of fact. The connotative power of such words as "symbol," "enchantment," "star," "forlorn," "windings hid," which are in themselves not essential to the story of his fishing trip, tends to carry the attention away from merely external notice of the experience to a consideration of its significance. He is not reproducing the facts of the fishing expedition, as did Mickle, to the smallest point of technique. The passage is rather, in all its beauty, an interpretation of the nuances which nature vouchsafes, not to the mighty hunter, who is

bent upon capturing his prey, but to the sensitive boy who responds to spiritual suggestions of external nature. Wordsworth tells of no quarry. Where Somerville and Mickle enjoyed the physical delights involved in the unequal test of wits between man and animal, Wordsworth went so far as to destroy the efficacy of rod and line except as symbols that led the boy into a land of enchantment.

He differs from preceding poets in the willingness to use concrete details. His interest lies in their influence on character development. In *The Excursion* the two school-boys who burst upon the company in the parsonage are "keen anglers" elated with "unusual spoil" (VII). One bears a willow pannier, and the other carries a smooth blue stone on which are outspread in order from largest to smallest a "store of gleaming crimson-spotted trouts." The boys tell the story of each catch, not omitting that of the "very monarch of the brook" who had escaped them. Wordsworth employs this solid substratum of detailed fact as a basis for interpretation of the character of the boys.

In the episode of the raven's nest in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's point of view stands out in sharp contrast to that of the sentimental poets who wholly condemned schoolboys for pilfering nests. When spring had warmed the valley of Yewdale, he and his companions moved as

plunderers where the mother bird  
Had in high places built her lodge. (I)

Unlike Jago and Graeme, he does not wholly condemn these incursions: they were not an end in themselves, but the pilfering led to realizations of spiritual manifestations that would not have come to the boy from any other source:

Our object and inglorious, yet the end  
Was not ignoble.



When the boy has finally climbed to where he overhangs the raven's nest, Wordsworth loses sight of the quarry in an interpretation of the boy's sense of oneness with eternal forces.

Oh! when I have hung  
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass  
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock  
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)  
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,  
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time  
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,  
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind  
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky  
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

Far from overlooking the physical boy and his natural activities, the poet is nevertheless absorbed in an effort to catch fleeting glimpses of a growing boy's soul life. This he accomplishes by analysing his own early experiences in fields and woods, where nature taught him in boyhood with inscrutable workmanship those elements that are a needful part of the calm moments he enjoys when worthy of himself.

Praise to the end!

Thanks to the means which nature deigned to employ;  
Whether her fearless visitings, or those  
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light  
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use  
Severer interventions, ministry  
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

This deeper insight is revealed, again, in his notice of another phase of the growing boy's activities. Wordsworth extended interest in outdoor play to include the child's delight in boating. Hand in hand with this extension of boundaries there will be noted a difference of treatment. There is a vast difference between the early



poet's brief generalization and almost bare enumeration,<sup>1</sup> and the more leisurely lines of Wordsworth which retard the action in order to linger affectionately over details. Wordsworth's forerunners—for especially Bruce, Lovibond, Scott, and Beattie were his poetic forbears in their ability to feel if not fully to express recollection of childish play—had not learned the art of poetically fusing natural phenomena, to which they sensitively reacted, with a natural philosophy of which they were only dimly conscious. Wordsworth's narrative of the boat ride in *The Excursion* incorporates details of preparation in the vicar's cottage, the walk down the stream bed to the lake, the arrival of the two boys, the row to the island, the picnic, and the return. The bare details necessary for a visualization of the outing would not demand half of the one hundred and fifty blank verse lines Wordsworth devoted to his description. The essential difference between the earlier poets and later master does not lie merely in the addition of such details as skimming stones and awakening the echoes, or gathering water lilies, details which in themselves enrich the development of the theme. He has interwoven comments that reveal his deep insight into the significance of the minutest facts of observation. His method is discursive, but unity and harmony are achieved through the sympathetic observation of a seer who looks upon all manifestations of life with a high and clearly formulated philosophy that enhances the depth and beauty of external nature. He is not feeling his way dimly, but is working with conscious art, so that he may, instead of announcing his mood and then illustrating it enumeratively, fuse the mood and the external fact with an art that awakens in his reader a feeling for the unity of spirit and matter as manifested in the individual experience.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Thomas Warton's *The Hamlet*.

Islands in Lake Windermere were on many occasions the goal of boat races and boating excursions. His effective lines image the youthful rowers and their sweeping oars. But his interest is not in the race so much as in the lesson which the quiet retreat on the island taught of the self-sufficing power of solitude. In the evening when the boys lay in their boats while a comrade on the island played on a flute, the young Wordsworth's sympathies were enlarged, and the "common range of visible things" grew dearer to him.

He not only throws about common experience a halo of imagination, but succeeds in associating, and often fusing, the experience with the powers of the universe. In such treatment children no longer stand apart, but are merged with the eternal flux of life as revealed in nature. Wordsworth is not satisfied to rest in the observation of phenomena, but goes on to interpret their significance for the child.

### III

The growing tendency to look back with affection on early associations is revealed most fully in connection with the change that took place in the eighteenth century from the rationalistic to the sentimental point of view. While the worship of reason was reaching its height in the encyclopedists and the academic war of pamphlets over a subject like deism, a new poetic method slowly gained a foothold by emphasizing the trustworthiness of impulses from the heart. Reason, it was beginning to be felt, had failed to provide an adequate solution for the momentous problems of religion and philosophy, and poets were increasingly willing to turn elsewhere for an answer to their questionings.<sup>1</sup> Their willingness to trust emotions had its effect on

<sup>1</sup> *An Essay on the Universe* (1739) by Moses Browne:  
Who scorn the Modish Sceptic's scoffing Chair,  
Faultless in Manners, in Opinion clear.

poetic treatment of childhood. The emotional interpretation of life irresistibly led poets to a contemplation of their childhood days in such a mood as that of Gray, whose lines enshrine the countryside near Eton and Stoke Pogis:

Ah, happy hills, ah, pleasing shade,  
 Ah, fields beloved in vain,  
 Where once my careless childhood strayed,  
 A stranger yet to pain.  
 I feel the gales, that from ye blow,  
 A momentary bliss bestow.

This tendency is especially strong in those transition poets who were born in remote villages and country places where they had tasted the sweets of solitude and come in contact with the life of woods and fields.<sup>1</sup> There they had vaguely

<sup>1</sup> Although one must always except Charles Lamb's affection for London, it is significant that the affection for native fields did not flourish in city or village surroundings. Scott recalls how rural Amwell stirred him to poetry in early youth; but even he, whose name has become attached to that of the hamlet, sings of "lovely sylvan scenes." Burns is not thinking of the village when he refers incidentally but feelingly to Ayr, "my dear, my native ground." Fitzgerald, obviously writing in imitation of Goldsmith, would dwell upon the charms of his native village, but like Scott notices chiefly surrounding farms and "verdant hills." There is humor too in his inability to weave the name of his beloved Tipperary into verse (*The Academic Sportsman*):

And thee, dear village! loveliest of the clime,  
 (Fain would I name thee, but I can't in rhyme)  
 Where first my years in youthful pleasures passed.

Crabbe's native Aldborough has come off badly in the lines which image its hideous squalor. Bristol was doubly unfortunate as remembered by Chatterton and Lovell. They speak of their native city in terms of vituperation. Chatterton's *Last Verses* are bitter:

Farewell, Bristolia's dingy piles of brick,  
 Lovers of Mammon, worshippers of Trick.  
 Ye spurned the boy who gave you antique lays.

Lovell's *Bristol* apostrophizes Chatterton as the ill-starred youth



felt spiritual ministrations which constitute the determining factor in Wordsworth's recollections of childhood play.

The attention of early poets to the native fields motive prepared the way for Wordsworth's conception in *The Prelude* and *Ode*. Recollection, therefore, must be associated with agreeable sensations, for in the romantic development the tendency is to purify and exalt childhood. Unpleasant associations have a negative influence that is out of harmony with the poet's chief intention.<sup>1</sup> This excludes, for instance, the sentiment that departure or banishment from native fields is a misfortune.<sup>2</sup> A favorite device is to pic-

who was luckless to have been born in a city where no one fostered worth. He writes of Bristol:

The widows mourn, the fatherless complain,  
But (shame to Bristol!) still they call in vain.

<sup>1</sup> In Johnson's penance for a boyish act of disobedience one feels the genuine heart-beats of the pious doctor. "Once, indeed, I was disobedient; I refused to attend my father to Uttoxeter market. Pride was the source of that refusal, and the remembrance of it was painful. A few years ago, I desired to atone for this fault. I went to Uttoxeter in very bad weather, and stood for a considerable time bareheaded in the rain, on the spot where my father's stall used to stand. In contrition I stood, and I hope the penance was expiatory."

<sup>2</sup> Logan's *The Lovers* pictures Harriet, who is about to flee with Henry, weeping sentimentally over her departure from the castle in which she was born. Bruce's *Lochleven No More* is conceived in a mood that emphasizes equally the pains of separation from native fields and from his boyish love Peggy. The legal authority William Blackstone pictures the man condemned to exile as turning about on an eminence that will shut him off from home. (*A Lawyer's Farewell to his Muse*):

There, melting at the well-known view,  
Drops a last tear, and bids adieu.

In an *Elegy*, Daniel Hayes vaguely connects the sentiment with inherited misfortunes when he depicts the longing of the man who feels that he is probably expiating an impious act which was com-



ture the nostalgia of the sea-roving sailor. In *Syr Martyn*, Mickle incidentally notices a sea rover who had toiled on the seven seas for ten long years, cheered by the hope of revisiting his native soil. Arrived at his childhood home, he wandered over the meadow and in the shade of the elms by the streamlet, where he listened to the cawing rooks. Mickle enters into the spirit of the wanderer and makes a genuine effort to express the sentiment that prompts recollection of childhood haunts.

In lines *Composed by the Sea-Shore*, Wordsworth analyzes the common human emotions that lead to a desire for the happiness of obscurity. The specifically romantic attitude toward native fields sprang from this longing for quiet after the labors and disappointments of life. Wordsworth holds that where realization of the dream is possible to men in many ordinary walks of life, the sailor is compelled to rest in the world of memory. On the restless sea the sailor, more than men elsewhere, knows how

sad it is, in sight of foreign shores,  
Daily to think on old familiar doors,  
Hearths loved in childhood, and ancestral floors.

It was common even in the classicist tradition to take notice of the normal human trait that leads men to think

mitted perhaps by an ancestor, and which has brought upon him the curse of separation from friends in native fields. In a poem attributed to Burns, the *Elegy on "Stella"* (1787), the subject of which is supposed to be Mary Campbell, whose grave he visited in the kirkyard in the West Highlands, Burns's rising tears flow for the unhappy Stella who was stricken far from her loved friends.—Compare lines from one of Shenstone's *Songs*:

Not more, the schoolboy that expires  
Far from his native home, requires  
To see some friend's familiar face,  
Or meet a parent's last embrace.

Compare also *Elinor* (1799), one of Southey's *Botany-Bay Eclogues*.

back affectionately to their childhood days. But the classicists and their followers did not attach to the recollection any such mood as that of the romanticists. They may note how in manhood it is human to look with dear regard on childhood. But their observation refers merely to the commonplace experience which Somerville expressed in his preface to *The Chase*: "The old and infirm have at least this privilege, that they can recall to their minds those scenes of joy in which they once delighted. . . . The amusements of our youth are the boast and comfort of our declining years."

In *Birth-Day Verses on Mr. Ford*, Swift voiced the pre-romantic attitude toward locality with reference to affection for native fields.

She bid me, with a serious face,  
Be sure conceal the time and place;  
And not my compliment to spoil,  
By calling this your native soil.

Later he addresses Mr. Ford.

Can you on Dublin look with scorn;  
Yet here were you and Ormond born.

The following lines make clear the lack of sympathy which the classicists felt with what by the end of the century had become a commonplace in Romanticist verse.

Oh! were but you and I so wise  
To see with Robert Grattan's eyes.  
Robin adores that spot of earth,  
That literal spot, which gave him birth,  
And swears Belcamp is, to his taste,  
As fine as Hampton Court at least.  
When to your friends you would enhance  
The praise of Italy or France,  
For grandeur, elegance, or wit,  
We gladly hear you, and submit:

But then, to come and keep a clutter  
 For this or that side of the gutter.  
 To live in this or the' other isle,  
 We cannot think it worth your while;  
 For, take it kindly or amiss,  
 The difference but amounts to this,  
 We bury on our side the Channel  
 In linen, and you your's in flannel.<sup>1</sup>

The essentially new element is the romantic emotion which was awakened by recollection of specific localities. This is extended so that companions of childhood are remembered in connection with native fields. Lifelong friendship is enriched by recollection of childhood play. In Cowper's lines on Edward Thurlow, the promotion of his friend to the Lord High Chancellorship is enhanced by the recollection that his abilities had been recognized from the days when he was a fellow apprentice. Cowper's *To Warren Hastings* is attached, in the speaking title, to their schoolboy fellowship at Westminster. Cowper can not believe the accusations brought against his schoolmate, whom he had known when young to possess those gentle qualities which could not have made him "the worst of men."

In *Coming to the Country*, Graeme identifies early friendship with native fields in a mood of personal reminiscence.

<sup>1</sup> Contrast *On Revisiting the Place of my Nativity* (1800), in which Robert Bloomfield tells how, after he had sighed for "Twelve successive Summers," he "heard the language of enchanting Spring,"

"Come to thy native groves and fruitful fields.

\*

I've clothed them all; the very Woods where thou  
 In infancy learn'dst praise from every bough."

"Remoter bliss" no longer glows in his bosom,

for I have heard and seen  
 The long-remembered voice, the church, the green.



Hail, dear companions of my youthful days!  
Frequented hills and natal valleys, hail!

The romantic emphasis is clear also in the mood and rhythm of Bruce's apostrophe to his friend Mr. George Anderson in *Lochleven*. He definitely associates their friendship with the district of Lochleven.

Nor shall the Muse forget thy friendly heart,  
O Lelius! partner of my youthful hours;  
How often, rising from the bed of peace,  
We would walk forth to meet the summer morn,  
Inhaling health and harmony of mind;  
Philosophers and friends; while science beamed  
With ray divine as lovely on our minds  
As yonder orient sun, whose welcome light  
Revealed the vernal landscape to the view.  
Yet oft, unbending from more serious thought,  
Much of the looser follies of mankind,  
Hum'rous and gay, we'd talk, and much would laugh;  
While, ever and anon, their foibles vain,  
Imagination offered to our view.

Jago's attachment to Shenstone was enhanced by the thought of their having been associated in youthful toil at Solihul, where Shenstone had called Jago with friendly voice from giddy sports to follow him "intent on better themes." In *Edge Hill*, Jago recalls their congenial pursuits

On Cherwell's banks, by kindred science nursed.

Southey unbends as far as his temperament allows him, in the lines *To Margaret Hill* (1798), when he recalls delightful companionship with his cousin in childhood. Though he has not seen her for many years, he owes her a debt of kindness.

For you and I  
Grew up together, and, when we look back  
Upon old times, our recollections paint  
The same familiar faces.



If he had the power of Merlin he would "make brave witchcraft" and carry her back with him to the play hours of their carefree childhood when they played with a Noah's ark, read in "Pilgrim's Progress," or lived free as on an island where no mariner might disturb them.

In such a blessed isle  
We might renew the days of infancy,  
And life, like a long childhood, pass away  
Without one care.

The association of life-long friendship and native fields finds its classical statement in *Auld Lang Syne*. [The frank human loyalty of a friendship that has stood the severe tests of separation in time and place has nowhere else in English literature found such unaffected expression. The warm-hearted peasant poet, who was human and a good companion always, felt the emotion in its purity, and expressed it without embellishment or adornment in the simple rhythm of folk song. Every line has the air of finality and universality characteristic of a classic. Its place is secure in the ritual of friendship.]

We twa hae run about the braes,  
And pou'd the gowans fine;  
But we've wandered many a weary fitt,  
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,  
Frae morning sun till dine;  
But seas between us braid hae roared  
Sin' auld lang syne.

Wordsworth emphasizes the personal element. Dorothy is dearer to Wordsworth because of their companionship when she was "A little Prattler among men." He gives expression to this mood in his tribute to Dorothy in *The Sparrow's Nest* (1801), when he recalls

The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by  
 My Father's house, in wet or dry  
 My sister Emmeline and I  
 Together visited.

\*

The Blessing of my later years  
 Was with me when a boy.

Fate, however, has not always allowed the poet to take a "cup o' kindness" with his life-long friend. The poet must often in later years mourn the loss of his childhood friend. In his monody on the death of William Arnot (*Daphnis: A Monody*), Bruce regrets that the promise of youthful friendship as revealed in their early companionship has not been fulfilled.

Oft by the side of Leven's crystal Lake,  
 Trembling beneath the closing lids of light,  
 With slow short-measured steps we took our walk.

\*

O, happy days!—for ever, ever gone!  
 When o'er the flowery green we ran, we played  
 With blooms bedropped by youthful Summer's hand;  
 Or, in the willow's shade,  
 We mimic castles built among the sand,  
 Soon by the sounding surge to be beat down.

In tracing the emergence of the childhood theme it is fascinating to note how transition poets grafted tender shoots of thought and emotion on the classicist stock. At times the classicist element predominates, especially in the poet's inability to create a new vocabulary that will adequately express his novel emotions, with the result that he must have recourse to stock poetic diction; or, as in the twilight musings of the sensitive Collins, divinations of the introspective attitude are daintily shadowed forth in a delicate lacework of classical allusions. Bruce's *To a Fountain* is especially interesting in its indications of the slow pro-

cess of separation that took place between traditional and new poetic material. Bruce's poem shows him to be a transition poet in whom the combined backward look and romantic vision lead almost to a confusion of treatment. The opening stanzas indicate that he was prompted by affection for native fields; yet he could not break away from expression of conventional pastoral love for his Anna, his play companion, who is addressed as "Young Naiad of the vale."

Then in simple language that suggests the later romanticists, Bruce gives a clear statement of recollection of his happy childhood, together with a more conventional glimpse of the age of innocence.

Fount of my native wood! thy murmurs greet  
My ear, like poet's heavenly strain:  
Fancy pictures in a dream  
The golden days of youth.

O state of innocence! O paradise!  
In Hope's gay garden, Fancy views  
Golden blossoms, golden fruits,  
And Eden ever green.

This suggests still another motive of special interest here—that of friendship:

Where now, ye dear companions of my youth!  
Ye brothers of my bosom! where  
Do ye tread the walks of life,  
Wide scattered o'er the world?

In the midst of the closing stanzas, which show a tendency toward eighteenth-century moralizing, he gives expression to the consolation that comes from romantic contemplation of external nature mingled with the gleam that the poet's imagination brings to nature.

But Hope's fair visions, and the beams of Joy,  
 Shall cheer my bosom: I will sing  
 Nature's beauty, Nature's birth.

In the face of his loss he will be inspired by visions that are fair as the landscapes of heavenly bliss. If his diction and poetic method reveal dependence on tradition, the forward look is nevertheless unmistakable in the predominant mood, which emphasizes recollection of locality in connection with childhood, and which is expressed with a high seriousness that involves suggestions of nature worship set forth in the language of religion.

Mickle's elegy on his brother (*Pollio*, 1762) was suggested when the poet revisited the woods and streams of their childhood play. His heart is charged with grief at sight of familiar scenes.

Oft with the rising sun, when life was new,  
 Along the woodland have I roamed with thee;  
 Oft by the moon have brushed the evening dew,  
 When all was fearless innocence and glee.

The sainted well, where yon bleak hill declines,  
 Has oft been conscious of those happy hours;  
 But now the hill, the river crowned with pines,  
 And sainted well, have lost their cheering powers:

For thou art gone—My guide, my friend, oh! where,  
 Where hast thou fled, and left me here behind?  
 My tenderest wish, my heart to thee was bare,  
 Oh, now cut off each passage to thy mind.

It would be unjust to Mickle to compare his lines with Tennyson's on Arthur Hallam, yet he gives simple expression to a deep sense of irreparable loss, in lines that turn to familiar scenes with an appreciation of external nature as a witness to the friendship that has been severed by death.



From the time of Bruce to the nineties, the taste for autobiographical reminiscence grew steadily.<sup>1</sup> Logan's *In Autumn* expresses the poet's sense of loss upon visiting "well known streams," "wonted groves," and "hospitable hall."

My steps, when innocent and young,  
These fairy paths pursued;  
And, wandering o'er the wild, I sung  
My fancies to the wood.

As a child he wept tenderly over "imaged woes," little knowing that "real life" was itself a "tragic tale." As he wanders among familiar scenes he hears no voice hailing "A stranger to his native bowers."

Companions of the youthful scene,  
Endeared from earliest days!  
With whom I sported on the green,  
Or roved the woodland maze!  
Long-exiled from your native clime,  
Or by the thunder-stroke of Time  
Snatched to the shadows of despair;  
I hear your voices in the wind,  
Your forms in every walk I find,  
I stretch my arms: ye vanish into air!

In an early poem, *The Retrospect* (1796), Southey expresses the utter loneliness of the mature man in scenes which were familiar in childhood, and among which he had hoped to realize again the pleasure and friendship of school-days. Memory's "busy eye" had often reconstructed

Each little vestige of the well-known place;  
Each wonted haunt and scene of youthful joy,  
Where merriment had cheered the careless boy;

<sup>1</sup> Although Wordsworth's choice of subject in *The Prelude* may have been influenced by Rousseau's *Confessions*, it is not necessary to take that book into account here, as the native development in poetry is clearly marked before the appearance of the *Confessions*.

Well pleased will fancy still the spot survey  
 Where once he triumphed in the boyish play,  
 Without one care where every morn he rose,  
 Where every evening sunk to calm repose.

Upon returning to familiar scenes, he finds that he is a stranger:

Where whilom all were friends I stand alone,  
 Unknowing all I saw, of all I saw unknown.

*On My Own Miniature Picture Taken at Two Years of Age* (1796) develops the backward look in a less sombre vein. As he contemplates the miniature, Southey is reminded of the changes that have taken place in himself and his friends. Was he once like the picture? Were the glowing cheeks, the pleasure-sparkling eyes, and the smooth brow really his? Years have wrought a strange alteration.

Of the friends  
 Who once so dearly prized this miniature,  
 And loved it for its likeness, some are gone  
 To their last home; and some, estranged in heart,  
 Beholding me, with quick-averted glance  
 Pass on the other side.

The elegiac strain was developed by Lamb in *The Old Familiar Faces* (1798) in a mood of retrospective regret stimulated by poignant grief that excluded classicalities and also whimsical lines like those of Thomas Hood in "I remember, I remember." Lamb mourns the loss of more than one friend:

I have had playmates, I have had companions,  
 In my days of childhood, in my joyful schooldays—  
 All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

He loved the fairest among women, but

Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her.

Although he may still laugh and carouse with his bosom cronies, he must continue to pace ghost-like the haunts of his childhood, and think of his friends how

Some they have died, and some they have left me,  
And some are taken from me; all are departed;  
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

In Wordsworth's lines on his school companion who "Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls," local feeling is stronger than that of severed friendship.<sup>1</sup>

Swift, who was willing to tolerate praise of the elegance and wit of France and Italy, would have had scant sympathy with modern sentimental journeys to the homes of English men of letters. Yet long before the close of the century Scott of Amwell's interest in Collins prompted a journey to Chichester to find the grave of the poet. In the year of Swift's death, Akenside in the *Ode to the Muse* recalls his early days when the muse set him aglow with prophetic heat which he no longer feels.

Where all the bright mysterious dreams  
Of haunted groves and tuneful streams,  
That woo'd my genius to divinest themes?

He asks for a free poetic hour among the duties which promise him fame as a physician. As he writes, he feels himself again possessed by the spirit of poetry, and his bosom burns.

Such on the banks of Tyne, confessed,  
I hailed the fair immortal guest,  
When first she sealed me for her own.

In less than a year after Swift's death, Collins published the *Ode to Pity* (1746), in which he sentimentally notices the birthplace of Otway by the river Arun. In this poem Collins has in fact voiced those emotions which, in their

<sup>1</sup> *The Prelude*, Book III.

association with the poet's recollection of his own birth-place and boyhood days, are an essential element in the specifically romantic feeling for native fields. Collins implores Pity to receive his humble strains in the name of Euripides, who composed his tragedies by the side of distant Ilissus. Then he wonders why he should find it necessary to roam in fancy by the side of that deserted stream: his native Arun has heard the complaints of a poet.

Wild Arun, too, has heard thy strains,  
And echo, 'midst my native plains,  
Been soothed by pity's lute.

There first the wren thy myrtles shed  
On gentlest Otway's infant head,  
To him thy cell was shown;  
And while he sung the female heart,  
With youth's soft notes unspoiled by art,  
Thy turtles mixed their own.

The susceptible Lovibond responded to this motive in *Verses written after passing through Findon, Sussex, 1768*. Findon was the birthplace of his teacher, the Rev. Mr. Woodeson.

Woodeson! these eyes have seen thy natal earth,  
Thy Findon, sloping from the southern downs;  
Have blessed the roof ennobled by thy birth.

Emotional recollection of the poet's birthplace is most frequently attached to childhood love of rivers and streams. The transitional poets were especially susceptible to running water, and Wordsworth's recollections of his own childhood are indissolubly associated with the lakes and streams of Lancashire and Westmoreland.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge's *The Brook* was to have traced one of the Quantock streams from its source to its mouth in the Bristol Channel. The notes and maps made by Coleridge subjected him to annoyance from agents of the British government, who suspected that he was



Thomas Warton's charming sonnet *To the River Lodon* foreshadows Wordsworth in that Warton reveals attachment to the river with which he had been familiar in early childhood. He recalls the banks of Lodon as fairy ground; it was there that his muse first lisped. In his memory the stream has become idealized through association with the pleasures of childhood; nowhere has he found skies and sun so pure as near his sweet native stream.<sup>1</sup> Langhorne apostrophizes the Tweed as the favored stream on the banks of which Thomson gathered flowers in childhood. Although the early poets did not amplify their recollection to the extent of Wordsworth in *The Prelude* and other poems like the *Dudon* sonnets, they were nevertheless prone to recall the first exercise of the poetic faculty in connection with their roving in the meadows or woodlands by the side of a stream. Mason takes this lead so frequently that the reader tires of constant reminders of his wanderings on the banks of his favorite stream, a tributary of the Humber.

making topographical memoranda of military value to the French. (Is there, possibly, a connection between the interest in childhood and the fondness for "sources" and "springs" and "fountains"?)—Compare also Collins's *Ode on the Popular Superstitions*:

Ye splendid friths and lakes, which, far away,  
Are by smooth Annan filled or pastoral Tay,  
Or Don's romantic springs, at distance hail.

Compare also, Samuel Marsh Oram's *To the River Stour*, "Where Fielding oft musing delighted to rove."

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Cooper recalls how he wandered as an infant by Trent's "pellucid streams." On his sick-bed Smollett reverted in thought to his native Leven-water:

Pure stream! in whose transparent wave  
My youthful limbs I wont to lave,  
No torrents stain thy limpid source;  
No rocks impede thy dimpling course,  
That sweetly warbles o'er its bed.

Langhorne and Bruce reveal special fondness for native streams.<sup>1</sup> John Langhorne was born at Kirkby Stephen in 1735, and was first sent to a school at Winton, in Westmoreland, and later to one at Appleby, until the age of eighteen. He was thus brought under the influence of the same natural scenery as Wordsworth. In the closing stanza of his lines to the *Genius of Westmoreland* he dedicates, while in his native shades retired, his votive lay to the spirit which had stimulated his youthful endeavors, and from which he had caught the sacred fire. It was none other than the "hidden power of these wild groves." As early as 1759 he added to the numerous detached poems dedicated to rivers, his address *To the River Eden*. Though thickly overlaid with "diction" and classicist embellishments, true feeling is suggested in the opening stanzas, addressed to

Delightful Eden! parent stream!

In a pastoral vein he mourns lost love and friendship, but says that

'Tis yet some joy to think of thee.

He too had strayed pensively along the "mazy shore," and would paint those scenes again where he had played with infant joy. Although Langhorne often echoes Thomson, he could be as definite as Wordsworth in recalling specific locality.

*A Farewell Hymn to the Valley of Irwan* indicates the extent to which Langhorne had freed himself from classicist vocabulary. Although he is obviously inspired by romantic emotions, his expression is not always, to the same extent as in this hymn, characteristic of the freer vocabulary of later writers. In this poem (which in its mood may be con-

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth believed that Langhorne's poetry was not held in as high esteem as it should be (K. Lienemann, *Die Belesenheit von William Wordsworth*. Berlin, 1908, p. 91).

sidered to suggest Wordsworth's farewell to his native regions) he succeeds in phrasing his thought without classical embellishment. Like Bruce he has come under the influence of Collins and Gray in his love for the hour of twilight, which was favorable to sentimental musings. But at the same time he also provides an early parallel for Wordsworth's loving recollection of spots endeared to him in childhood. His musings had led him through the fields of Irwan's vale, where he listened to the song of the black-bird. He must now bewail the loss of these pleasures. Like Wordsworth, although without his power of expression, he will prize the memory of his experiences.

Yet still, within yon vacant grove,  
To mark the close of parting day;  
Along yon flow'ry banks to rove,  
And watch the wave that winds away;  
Fair Fancy sure shall never fail,  
Tho' far from these, and Irwan's vale!

Although Bruce sings of many streams, he does so with special delight of his native Gairney. Michael Bruce was born in 1746 in a little hamlet on the banks of Lochleven in Kinrossshire. In *Lochleven* (1766) he set out to record

the dear remembrance of his native fields

before a slow disease carried him off at the age of twenty-one as one of the minor inheritors of unfulfilled renown. Like other transition poets, the sensitive Bruce pointed the way for the early and late romantic poets who were preoccupied with the expression of their love of external nature. His desire was to make immortal the rivers of his youth; they shall flow "in thy poet's lays." Beauty dwells ever-blooming on the banks of Leven; and he first tuned his Doric reed on the banks of the sweetly-winding Gairney. His twilight musings were probably stimulated by the



"sweet-complaining" Gray; and his debt to Thomson is clear in his lofty conception of divine joy and goodness in external nature. He recognizes an omnipresent creator who is

Ever present through the peopled space  
Of vast Creation's infinite extent,  
Pours life, and bliss, and beauty, pours Himself,  
His own essential goodness, o'er the minds  
Of happy beings, thro' ten thousand worlds.

Bruce's lines, which lead into his address to his childhood friend Lelius, indicate that Wordsworth was the crown of a development that linked the recollection of childhood with the infinite goodness and powers of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly forty years before *The Prelude*, Bruce wrote in *Lochleven* an autobiographical poem that suggests a loving remembrance of childhood days among beautiful natural surroundings. The typical descriptions of Thomson have given way to the personal point of view; Bruce has definitely connected external nature with the individual experience.

Still as I mount, the less'ning hills decline,  
Till high above them northern Grampius lifts  
His hoary head, bending beneath a load  
Of everlasting snow. O'er southern fields  
I see the Cheviot hills. . . .  
But chief mine eye on the subjected vale  
Of Leven pleased looks down.

Although Akenside's *Ode to the Muse* (1745) contains perhaps the earliest extended personal recollection of native fields, the romantic longing to be again a child does not appear in the earlier form of his *Pleasures of the Imagination*.

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth possessed Bruce's poems as collected by Anderson. Dorothy read *Lochleven* in 1801. Wordsworth wished to see a monument erected on the banks of Lochleven, "to the memory of the innocent and tender-hearted Michael Bruce." (Lienemann, op. cit., p. 165.)



*tion.* The growth of sentiment during the intervening years is reflected in the revised form of this poem. In the uncompleted fourth book of the revised version (1770), where Akenside set himself the task of exploring the secret paths of early genius, he wonders where youthful poets now invoke the muse, and associates them at once with rivers.

What wild river's brink at eve  
Imprint your steps?

This thought stimulated the wish that he might again as in his youth be with them.

—Would I again were with you!—O ye dales  
Of Tyne, and ye most ancient woodlands; where  
Oft as the giant flood obliquely strides,  
And his banks open, and his lawns extend,  
Stops short the pleased traveler to view.

\*

O ye Northumbrian shades, which overlook  
The rocky pavement and the mossy falls  
Of solitary Wensbeck's limpid stream;  
How gladly I recall your well-known seats  
Beloved of old, and that delightful time  
When all alone, for many a summer's day,  
I wandered through your calm recesses, led  
In silence by some powerful hand unseen!

In the poet's notice of the activities of the growing boy, there is a change, then, from generalized recollection to Akenside's extended treatment, and to Southey's well-defined autobiographical attitude toward early childhood. In Akenside's apostrophe to the Wensbeck and the dales of Tyne, which suggests definitely the rhythm and mood of Wordsworth, there is no longer mere juxtaposition of mood and incident, but instead a fusion of both elements. The way has been clearly marked for Wordsworth's mood in the poem which in the chronological arrangement of his poems

appears as the first. It is the conclusion of the poem he wrote in 1786 in anticipation of leaving Hawkeshead with the vale of Esthwaite and his native regions. In these youthful lines he clearly foreshadows the mood of *The Prelude*. He feels with fervid emotion,

That, wheresoe'er my steps may tend,  
And whensoe'er my course shall end,  
If in that hour a single tie  
Survive of local sympathy,  
My soul will cast the backward view,  
The longing look alone on you.

### CHAPTER III

#### CHILDREN OF THE POOR

The extent to which poets had prepared the way for Wordsworth's recollection of his own childhood is evident in their sentiment for native fields. Another manifestation of Wordsworth's profound interest in childhood appears in his constructive suggestions for ameliorating the condition of the children of the poor. The influences which helped to shape his views are felt in poetry as early as Thomson's *Seasons*.

Constant repetition of the difference between the man-made city and the God-given beauty of the country reveals an ethical concept of increasing power in eighteenth-century poetry. In the contrast, city life is always unfavorably depicted: natural man has no opportunity to realize himself under artificial conditions of city life.<sup>1</sup> This attitude can be understood in the light of philosophical tendencies that influenced poets. Hobbes had developed a philosophy which asserted that man is by nature selfish, and that compassion is a sign of weakness. To curb this selfishness of the individual he had advocated a strong central government. The new stimulus felt by poets with whose work this study is concerned, derived not from the egoistic philosophy of Hobbes or the orthodox teachings of the church on original sin, which emphasized the imperfections of natural man, but from the philosophy of the Earl of Shaftes-

<sup>1</sup> Compare Thomson's early poem *Of a Country Life*, beginning,

I hate the clamours of the smoky towns.  
See also Nathaniel Cotton's *The Fireside*.

bury, who asserted the doctrine of natural goodness.<sup>1</sup> Thomson's harmony of all created beings derives from Shaftesbury's identification of the good and the beautiful. In this conception God, who is held to be sufficiently revealed in natural phenomena, is the embodiment of goodness; he is the spirit of love, in which is implied benevolence towards man, whom he created for happiness. Compassion, therefore, is not a weakness, but a virtue; for if man is by nature a virtuous being, he must respect his fellow man and promote his happiness. To lack compassion is to be out of harmony with nature, which is beautiful. The essence of Shaftesbury's philosophy in those ethical aspects which are especially to be noted in the poetry with which the following paragraphs are concerned, is that the benevolent impulses of natural man are spontaneous and instinctive.

To Shaftesbury may be traced the vigorous interest in philanthropy which animates the poetry of the century.<sup>2</sup> His emphasis on the social affections stimulated poets. Although it has been said that Englishmen were deeply interested in abolishing negro slave traffic at the very time when women and, especially, children were condemned to industrial slavery, it must be remembered that those poets who used benevolence as their slogan were a mighty force in the awakening of social consciousness, the results of which were remedial measures and legislation by which children benefited. Mandeville's coarse attack on Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* had emphasized the repulsive features of the philosophy of Hobbes. The cynicism of the pessimistic Mandeville went so far as to question the right of children

<sup>1</sup> *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. (1711).

<sup>2</sup> *Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England, 1700-1760*, by C. A. Moore. Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 1916.



of the poor to what little education had been provided for them in charity schools during the reign of Queen Anne. Poets did not follow Mandeville. It is clear, however, that native influences determined their interest in benevolence before Rousseau added his strength to their cause after 1760.<sup>1</sup> In fact, even before the middle of the century, preoccupation with ethical problems amounts almost to a convention. The readiness with which poets responded to benevolence is to be explained, furthermore, on the basis of social conditions. Luxury had been on the increase even before 1763, when England definitely took its place as the first power among nations. The industrial revolution increased poverty and unrest among the masses. A new age was coming into being, and sensitive poets reflected the pains of the new birth. Their sensibilities were aroused by wrongs which they saw in the social readjustment.

The extent of their interest in universal benevolence is manifested in sympathetic notice of orphans, and in attacks on luxury and deplorable conditions attributed to the rise of industry. But before they awakened to practical problems, poets had been sensitive to the abuse of animals. In fact, before 1750, poets had awakened more fully to abuses of birds and animals than to hardships of children of the poor. It will be necessary, therefore, to note first of all how sympathy for children was closely bound up with compassion for animals.

<sup>1</sup> Shaftesbury's influence continued strong up to the time of the Revolution. When, however, the democratic implications of his philosophy became obvious in the audacious presentation of Rousseau and Paine, and in the events of the Revolution itself, his popularity at once declined. Eleven editions of the *Characteristics* appeared between 1711 and 1790, but after 1790 no new edition appeared until 1870. (*Characteristics*, edited by John M. Robertson, 2 vols., London, 1900.)

## I

Thomson and those who like him exalted rural simplicity at the expense of city manners, found congenial matter in animal life. Unlike animals, man had under the baneful influence of artificial society drifted far from his natural self. His instincts had become dulled to such an extent that, for instance, he neglected even his offspring in order to satisfy a craving for luxury and pleasure. He prefers smoky cities and palaces to sheltering groves, warm caves, and deep-sunk valleys.<sup>1</sup> God's forests stand neglected for the comforts of civilization. In *Fashion*, Joseph Warton scorns artificial pleasures: the fashionable woman has lost sight of natural instincts. Warton would lead her to imitate the loyalty of animals to their young. At ten in the morning the fashionable woman drinks chocolate and strokes Fop, her lap dog;<sup>2</sup> she rises at noon, and after an elaborate toilette dines at three.

Meanwhile her babes with some foul nurse remain;  
 For modern dames a mother's cares disdain;  
 Each fortnight once she bears to see the brats,  
 'For oh! they stun one's ears like squalling cats.'  
 Tigers and pards protect and nurse their young,  
 The parent snake will roll her forked tongue,  
 The vulture hovers vengeful o'er her nest,  
 If the rude hand her helpless brood infest;  
 Shall lovely woman, softest frame of heaven,  
 To whom were tears and feeling pity given,  
 Most fashionably cruel, less regard  
 Her offspring than the vulture, snake, and pard?

<sup>1</sup> J. Warton: *The Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature* (1740).

<sup>2</sup> Compare Somerville's *The Chase* (1735):  
 the rustic dames

Shall at thy kennel wait, and in their laps  
 Receive thy growing hopes, with many a kiss  
 Caress, and dignify their little charge  
 With some great title. . . .

Isaac Watts distinguishes between children who are sinful, and animals that reflect the glory of God. It is not in itself significant that the emmet and bee are held up as models, because Watts's purpose is didactic; but plants and animals are also referred to as containing the essence of their maker's goodness, which children are taught to see in nature. Watts can see beauty and goodness everywhere except in the heart of the child, between whom and external nature he recognizes a breach. In *Address to the Deity* he is unable to think of man as part of the beauty of the created universe; yet

Beast and birds with laboring throats  
Teach us a God in thousand notes.

Watts seems in fact to be groping for a religious mood that shall, like the sentimental contemplation of romantic poets, mysteriously reveal God through the heart. Because of the inhibition which the doctrine of natural depravity puts upon him, he is unable to complete the circle. The result is a cleavage between the child and the beauties of nature that are lauded in *Praise for Creation and Providence* (1720). *Against Pride in Clothes* strikes the balance against the child, whom Watts does not make a partaker in the goodness and beauty of nature. The child is made to say,

The tulip and the butterfly  
Appear in gayer coats than I;  
Let me be dressed fine as I will,  
Flies, worms, and flowers exceed me still.<sup>1</sup>

Humanitarian conceptions find no place in Somerville's *The Chase*, which voices the traditional sentiment of

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Cotton's *The Beau and the Viper*:

What if I show that only man  
Appears defective in the plan!



country gentlemen who believe that animals were created for man, and that he is their master.<sup>1</sup>

Thomson, on the other hand, disapproves of the hunt because it wantonly interferes with the happiness to which all created beings are entitled. In *Winter* he notices the hunter only to condemn him. Helpless birds merit the protection of man. When the spirit of universal benevolence is manifest in nature in early spring, birds are the first to sing of love. Even birds whose note is harsh and discordant when heard alone—like the jays, rooks, and daws—merge harmoniously into the chorus of song. Thomson lovingly names over the list of romantic birds, and in terms of domestic life describes their mating, nesting, and raising of the young. He does not omit to focus his lines on the self-sacrifice of parent birds who unselfishly bear the most delicious morsels to their nestlings; and he brings home the humanitarian thesis in the closing illustration of poverty-stricken cottagers who check their appetites to give their children food.<sup>2</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> The brute creation are his property,  
 Subservient to his will, and for him made:  
 As hurtful these he kills, as useful those  
 Preserves; their sole and arbitrary king.

(*The Chase, Book IV*)

<sup>2</sup> Yet in the episode of the starved Pyrennean wolves that scour the countryside, Thomson recognizes the ferocity of animals bent on prey:

- Rapacious, at the mother's throat they fly,  
 And tear the screaming infant from her breast.  
 Although protesting against man's cruelty, later poets are not blind to the cruelty of nature. In *Sensibility*, Burns hears  
 the woodlark charm the forest,  
 Telling o'er his little joys;  
 But alas! a prey the surest  
 To each pirate of the skies. (Continued)



Smollett's satire bears witness to widespread sympathy for animals. Before the influence of Rousseau had been felt, Smollett had burlesqued Lyttleton's *Monody* (1747). His *Burlesque Ode* failed, however, to stem the ever increasing tide of sentimental tears. To ascribe Shaw's *Monody* (1768) and *Ode to the Nightingale* (1771) wholly to the influence of Rousseau is to ignore the persistent native influence of Shaftesbury and Thomson, and the direct connection which Shaw himself establishes between his poems and the *Monody* of Lyttleton.<sup>1</sup>

Lovibond brings native benevolist teachings definitely into connection with childhood. In *Rural Sports* he castigates man for lack of feeling towards animals, and then points to children who lure barnyard fowl only to feed them. In the fresh sunshine of early morning all creation swells the chorus of delight and love. Not so with those who wreak havoc by cheering the baying pack. Lovibond has visions of the unity of man and animal creation ("For concord, for the harmonious whole") that was to stir Coleridge and Wordsworth. He is not content to rest in a negative

The image of the hawk as the enemy of domestic happiness is used again in *Bonie Jean* and *How Cruel are the Parents*. Mason's *English Garden* has an interesting passage that shows how the hawk preys upon the mother bird. Mason thinks back to the golden age when the law of tooth and claw did not prevail. Scott faced unpalatable facts in *Approach of Winter*:

Who dreams of Nature, free from Nature's strife?

Who dreams of constant happiness below?

The hope-flushed enterer on the stage of life;

The youth to knowledge unchastised by woe.

<sup>1</sup> Although Henry Brooke's *Universal Beauty* (1735) does not notice childhood, Brooke's appeal for universal harmony, and his praise of insects, together with moral lessons that he derives from animal life, suggest the attitude of J. Warton, whose comparison between animals and man is unfavorable to man.

attitude of condemnation, but asks man to observe the instinctive humanity of children:

beneath thy porch, in social joy  
Sit and approve thy infant's virtuous haste,  
Humanity's sweet tones while all employ  
To lure the winged domestics to repast.

The parent should learn from his children to avoid wanton killing of God's creatures, and instead

Let Heaven's best joy be thine, benevolence.

The closing lines foreshadow the moral of Coleridge's stanzas in *The Ancient Mariner*, in which the later poet moralizes the experience of the sailor who had violated the law of love that permeates the universe. Lovibond teaches that it is God's decree, instinctively obeyed by children,

To spare thy own, nor shed another's blood:  
Heaven breathes benevolence, to all, to thee;  
Each being's bliss consummates general good.

The significance of *Rural Sports* lies in its use of children to represent the ideal state to which man must aspire if he wishes to live according to the laws of nature.

Where Lovibond held up the farmer's children as an ideal of benevolence, Beattie's *Minstrel* (1771) definitely portrays in Edwin an individual child who responds to the ideals of sentimental humanitarianism.

His heart, from cruel sport estranged, would bleed  
To work the woe of any living thing,  
By trap, or net, by arrow or by sling;  
These he detested; those he scorned to wield:  
He wished to be the guardian, not the king,  
Tyrant far less, or traitor of the field;

And sure the silvan reign unbloody joy might yield.

In Beattie the change from Somerville's conception of man as the sole and arbitrary king to the sentimental view of man as the guardian, indicates the difference between two

outlooks on life. In the poetic treatment of children it indicates the triumph of Shaftesbury's teachings of universal benevolence.<sup>1</sup>

Burns, Cowper, and Southey, of the later group of poets, were alive to the sufferings of animals. In his lines *To a Mouse*, Burns talks to the field mouse as tenderly as he would to a hurt child, and mourns over the fact that man has broken natural ties. In *The Wounded Hare* he invokes a curse upon the man who hunts hares during the breeding season. Among the passages that condemn the hunter of wild animals, this is one of the most vigorous. Burns's letter to Cunningham reveals the sincerity of his indignation.<sup>2</sup> He develops the motive in terms of domestic life:

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe;  
The playful pair crowd fondly by thy side;  
Ah! helpless nurslings, who will now provide  
That life a mother only can bestow!

<sup>1</sup> Compare Thomas Blacklock, one of the chief benevolists, who banished the hunt from the neighborhood of his cottage, and wished to trace "Kind Nature's laws with sacred Ashley." Cp. Bruce's *Elegy to Spring*:

Thus ASHLEY gathered Academic bays;  
Thus gentle THOMSON as the Seasons roll, . . .

But contrast the boy in Robert Bedingfield's *The Education of Achilles*, who was accustomed "To grasp with tender hand the pointed spear."

<sup>2</sup> "One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields, sowing some grass-seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighboring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when all of them have young ones. Indeed, there is something in this business of destroying, for our sport, individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, which I could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue."



Cowper's defense of animals reflects the humanitarian implications of the evangelical revival. He pleads for the protection of bird and beast, not on the basis of natural goodness, but because he is prompted by Christian sympathy with the helpless. So he arrives by a different route at the same goal as those who follow Shaftesbury. Cowper's nature is so sensitive to abuse of animals, that he observed with pain how a neighbor's children played with a pet leveret about three months old. As they understood "better how to tease the poor creature than to feed it," the poet received their father's consent to take it under his protection.

The humanitarian thesis was uppermost in the mind of Southey, even when he expressed his personal attachment to the dog that had been the friend of his childhood. In the lines *On the Death of a Favorite Old Spaniel*, Southey lingers over recollections of childhood days spent in play with "poor Phyllis." He writes with simple tenderness of his personal loss.

thou hadst been  
Still the companion of my boyish sports;  
And, as I roamed o'er Avon's wooded cliffs,  
From many a day-dream has thy short, quick bark  
Recalled my wandering soul. I have beguiled  
Often the melancholy hours at school,  
Soured by some little tyrant, with the thought  
Of distant home, and I remembered then  
Thy faithful fondness; for not mean the joy,  
Returning at the happy holidays,  
I felt from thy dumb welcome.<sup>1</sup>

When the gate last closed upon Southey as he left his paternal roof, Phyllis lost her truest friend, and no one was left to plead

For the old age of brute fidelity.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Thomson's juvenile poem on his favorite sister and her cat: *Lily's Parting with her Cat*.



The closing lines of this early poem reveal the revolutionary and antagonistic Southey who had not yet found himself in the conservative spirit which lay at the root of his character and which dominated his later life. His plea for animals is in harmony with that of the benevolists.

Mine is no narrow creed;  
And He who gave thee being did not frame  
The mystery of life to be the sport  
Of merciless Man. There is another world  
For all that live and move,—a better one,  
Where the proud bipeds, who would fain confine  
INFINITE GOODNESS to the little bounds  
Of their own charity, may envy thee.

Southey's heart, to use his own words, has a genuine warmth, though it smokes not; his feelings are not mushroom feelings that spring up without seed and take no root. As a result, although he can not abandon himself to the spirit of universal benevolence as it has been observed in the poets who preceded him, he is apparently in full sympathy with their teachings.<sup>1</sup>

If the poet's escape from city to country seems like a weak or even selfish shrinking from responsibility, it must be remembered that before men were able to face the problems of practical reform, their hearts had to be attuned to the sorrows of man and, especially, of animals, the sympa-

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Day's *Sandford and Mertoun*: "I believe, as I have before told you, there is no animal that may not be rendered mild and in-offensive by good usage." (I, 236) Thomas Day undertook to ride an unbroken colt, and was killed for his pains.—It has been the custom to point to Day's *Sandford and Mertoun* as an example of Rousseau's direct influence on English thought. After a careful examination, however, Jacques Pons concludes that Day has not held to the fundamentals of Rousseau's teachings, and that we are not justified in calling his book "The Little Emile" or "The English Emile."

thetic observation of which was nursed in an environment favorable to the mood of universal benevolence. The poet's convictions were strengthened in remote hamlets from which as a vantage point the new message was sent to men who were moved to attempt practical reforms on individual initiative or through the agency of an organized institution like the church, or societies that grow out of church activities. Poets had to contend not only with conditions, but also with a state of mind that was responsible for those conditions. They fled from both when they left the city, but their message came back to city dwellers, many of whom were in the state of mind illustrated in the cynical letter of Lovelace to Bedford: "We begin, when boys, with birds; and when grown up, go on to women; and both, perhaps, in turn, experience our sportive cruelty."<sup>1</sup> If men were to be aroused to sympathy with the suffering of children, they had first to be awakened to a realization that kindness and love pervade all nature—even the nature which Somerville held to have been created for the sport of man. Poets, who were the earliest to awaken to a heartfelt brotherhood with animals, longed for the solitary places where cruelty and cynicism could not operate. It was the simple, feeling poet, nursed in solitude, who was destined to win men's hearts to consent to accept the spirit of benevolence as the moving force even in organized society. After the awakening, men were ready, toward the close of the century, for practical reforms.

## II

Readers of poetry in the eighteenth century must have responded to passages on childhood that now seem cold and conventional. In *Prospect of Peace*, Tickell writes of Britain's heroes,

<sup>1</sup> *Clarissa Harlowe*.

At whose dire names ten thousand widows pressed  
Their helpless orphans clinging to the breast.

The image of the widow and her orphans survives lustily in benevolist poetry. Although it is difficult for the modern reader to feel the emotional stimulus which the poet undoubtedly intended, the lines on widows and orphans must have suggested a coloring of sentiment that moved tears and a just indignation against social wrongs.<sup>1</sup> Those poets who felt social injustice, constantly employ traditional phrases in lines that are obviously meant to arouse compassion.<sup>2</sup> Joseph Warton in *Library* calls upon his readers to "hark, how dying infants shriek." Scott in *Recruiting* "hates that drum's discordant sound," which suggests only burning towns and widows' tears and orphans' moans.

Childhood in William Whitehead's *Elegy written at the convent of Haut Villers in Champagne, 1754*, is more vitally conceived than in Lovibond's *Ode to Youth*, J. Warton's *The Revenge of America*, or Graeme's *Loss of the Aurora*. On the banks of the Marne, the workman often recalls disastrous days when makers of war taught Christian zeal to authorize their crimes:

Oft to his children sportive on the grass  
Does dreadful tales of worn tradition tell.

<sup>1</sup> Beilby Porteus's *Death* portrays such crashing ruin and devastation that there is

not even a widow left  
To wail her sons.

<sup>2</sup> In like manner children are introduced in tragedy to heighten effect, as in Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage*, or *The Innocent Adultery*, and *Oroonoko*. In Home's *Douglas* the child appears on the stage to speak those appealing lines which long served in the schools as a favorite piece for declamation:

My name is Norval: on the Grampian hills,  
My father feeds his flocks. . . .



Although Smollett's *Tears of Scotland* (1746) was conceived in horror of atrocities, the lines seem cold and conventional to the modern reader. Yet in its day the poem must have evoked tears through portrayal of the misfortunes of the poor. The wretched man who from afar sees his property destroyed by armies, "Bethinks him of his babes and wife," and curses his fate. Infants perish in the field, and a parent who is driven to distraction sheds his children's blood. A mother who hears her helpless orphans cry for bread,

Weeps o'er her tender babes and dies.

Although Gay had observed slum children in London, he did not develop the humanitarian aspects of his material in the mood of Thomson and later poets. His treatment of London waifs has only a suggestion of the pathetic element which is prominent in Steele's sentimental sketches in the *Tatler*. The new ideal is expressed in Thomson's lines on Shaftesbury, who is

The generous Ashley thine, the friend of man;  
Who scanned his nature with a brother's eye,  
His weakness prompt to shade, to raise his aim,  
To touch the finer movements of the mind,  
And with the moral beauty charm the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Thomson, as a result, portrays conditions that add hardship to the sufferings of children. In the episode of the rider and horse who while benighted are lost in the bogs, the wife and "plaintive children" vainly await the father's return.<sup>2</sup> In another familiar passage in *Winter* the father is overtaken by a snow-storm, and, "stung with thoughts of home," flounders in the drifts. Horror fills

<sup>1</sup> *Summer*.

<sup>2</sup> *Autumn*.



his heart when he realizes that in place of being near his "tufted cottage rising through the snow," he is far from the beaten track. As he sinks helpless into the drift, thoughts of "tender anguish" overtake him. He thinks of

His wife, his children, and his friends unseen.  
In vain for him the officious wife prepares  
The fire fair-blazing, and the vestment warm;  
In vain his little children, peeping out  
Into the mingling storm, demand their sire,  
With tears of artless innocence. Alas!  
Nor wife, nor children, more shall he behold. . . .

Because he is awake to social wrongs, Thomson frankly makes himself the poetic advocate of the unfortunate and distressed by frequent and definite interest in charity. His philosophy of universal benevolence awakens a keen realization that unassuming worth is neglected, and that the good man's share is often gall and bitterness. He faces the problem of

Why the lone widow and her orphans pined  
In starving solitude; while luxury,  
In palaces, lay straining her low thought,  
To form unreal wants.

He is not wholly conventional in *Lord Talbot* when that lord is praised for a love of justice that led him to champion "trampled want and worth" and defend "suffering right." His reward is the highest tribute the helpless widow and her orphans can give, "The widow's sighs and orphan's tears" of gratitude.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare Fawkes's *On the Death of the Earl of Uxbridge* (1743). Blair in *William Law* praises the charitable work of Law and his fellow workers at Kings Clyffe. The spirit of benevolence is praised by Mackenzie in *Man of the World*: "their very errors were delightful . . . they were the errors of benevolence, generosity, and virtue."

In the same mood Thomson hails the investigators on the jail committee of 1729 as benefactors of mankind, and calls upon them as true patriots to resume their work. He can not forget the generous band who were "touched by human woe" to search the gloomy horrors of the jail, where, it must be recalled, incarcerated men lived with wife and children, as is clear from the *Vicar of Wakefield*.

Institutional life of children also receives his attention. Among the blameless poor he does not overlook

The helpless young that kiss no mother's hand.

In *Liberty* he states his conception of the service to be rendered by public institutions. Referring to the Foundling Hospital, he arouses sympathy for the work of salvaging orphans:

The dome resounding sweet with infant joy,  
From famine saved, and cruel-handed shame.

If men will realize their natural duties, the tender-hearted pedestrian need no longer be pained by the sights of want and misery:

No agonizing infant, that ne'er earned  
Its guiltless pangs

will be seen on London streets. Thomson is the first English poet who is wholly awakened to the sufferings endured by children of those who eat the "bitter bread of misery" and who shrink into the "sordid hut of cheerless poverty" which is "pierced by wintry winds."<sup>1</sup> He endeavors to stir the social consciousness of the wealthy. If the facts were faced, vice in high places would stand appalled, and the "heedless rambling impulse" would learn to think. The

<sup>1</sup> Compare Chatterton's *Resignation* for a description of an unsanitary cottage; and Crabbe's *Village*, Book I, ll. 260-267.

heart of charity would be warmed if man would but pause to consider the struggles of his less fortunate fellows: "The social tear would rise, the social sigh."

Thomson had no fear that his ethical interest would "deform the splendor of his strain." A passage in *Liberty* (V, 660-666) reveals his heartfelt sympathy with helpless children. He notes the bounteous stores which Britain has provided for orphans, and bursts into a fervid lyrical strain over the good that will accrue to society from a wise conservation of childhood. If the distresses of older people are relieved, it is their due; but if the wards are children, they will repay the "fondest care."

sweet

The morning shines in mercy's dews arrayed.  
Lo! how they rise! these families of Heaven!  
That! chief, (but why—ye bigots!—why so late?)  
Where blooms and warbles glad a rising age;  
What smiles of praise! and, while their song ascends,  
The listening seraph lays his lute aside.

Although Thomson's deep interest in children's welfare must have been stirred by recollections of hardship suffered by his widowed mother in the care of her children, the personal note is not heard in his lines.

Akenside and Collins write in the same mood. In *Winter Solstice* (1740) Akenside, an ardent benevolist, contrasts city and country life during a snow-storm. City folk are dancing, singing, or are comfortable by a "splendid fire."

Meantime, perhaps, with tender fears,  
Some village dame the curfew hears,  
While round the hearth the children play:  
At morn their father went abroad;  
The moon is sunk, and deep the road;  
She sighs, and wonders at his stay.

With less reticence than Akenside, Collins in *Ode on Popular Superstitions* develops the episode of the shepherd who,



bewildered in the fens, was drowned far from his flocks and cottage:

For him in vain his anxious wife shall wait,  
Or wander forth to meet him on his way;  
For him in vain at to-fall of the day,  
His babes shall linger at the unclosing gate.

The poetry of Richard Savage is interesting in that it supplements Thomson's generalized appeal for universal benevolence by occasionally breaking through the restraint which literary conventions laid upon poets of the age. In his *Wanderer* he tells how children unjustly suffer many penalties, and are brought up obscurely in a life of want and shame, as a result of the indiscretions of parents. He trembles at the thought that there are mothers capable of exposing children.

In a poem inscribed with "all due reverence to Mrs. Brett, once Countess of Macclesfield, and finished in the hours of deepest melancholy," he writes bitterly of his mother.<sup>1</sup> He charges that she pushed him out upon the sea of life, launching him without an oar. The concluding paragraphs disclose bitter invective. No mother's devotion shielded his infant innocence with prayer: no father's hand restrained him from vice or upheld him in virtue.

Mother, miscalled, farewell—of soul severe,  
This sad reflection yet may force a tear;  
All I was wretched by, to you I owed,  
Alone from strangers every comfort flowed.

In an age when the doctrine of universal benevolence permeated poetry, and when sentimental comedy and domestic tragedy were popular, such passages must have made a strong emotional appeal. His story, according to which he becomes a modern instance of exposure, won a favorable

<sup>1</sup> *The Bastard*.



hearing not only from Johnson, whose "Life of Savage" reads like a romance, but also from Lady Montagu and Aaron Hill, who befriended him.

In the poem *Of Public Spirit (in regard to Public Works)*, Savage attacks luxury with its artificialities and pompous whims as they appear in landscaped gardens. Man's interest should not be selfish, but social. Thinking of his own experience, he holds that there is need in the nation for public institutions for the care of waifs. He emphasizes the need of conserving the child. The thoughtful care of the state should not allow the helpless to suffer for errors not their own. His suggestion that the mother should be shielded provided the child is conserved, is the same in intention as the legislation that marks Napoleon among statesmen as a friend of children. Savage also considered himself to have suffered injustice from the state, which is the ward of orphans. He reproaches unkind peers for having neglected his rights.

The senate next, whose aid the helpless own,  
Forgot my infant wrongs, and mine alone.

William Hamilton's *Ode (on the new year, 1739)* is a severe arraignment of luxury. No one is so hateful to him as the person in power who misuses orphans. He pours contempt on the avaricious who squander on a luxurious dinner what they "Stole from the orphan and the poor." Could not "impious greatness" give the smallest alms from its "vile profusion"? "One table's vain intemperate load" would have provided health and bread for cottage children.<sup>1</sup> If the worldling would but listen, the oft-repeated words of

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton, like other benevolist poets after 1730, leaned heavily on Thomson. Cp. *Summer* for a description of a spend-thrift, who squandered on himself

what might have cheered  
A drooping family of modest worth.

gratitude expressed by cottagers would be sweeter and more appealing in their simple sincerity than the seducing trills of Farinelli. Hamilton holds that no degeneracy is greater than that of the man who was by nature kind, but who has been corrupted by idle dreams of greatness in the form of ribbons and coronets to the point where he "Unmoved shall riot at the orphan's cost." His muse will lay bare their treachery, and then let conscience judge "between the oppressed and you."

See, there, undried, the widow's tears;  
See, there, unsoothed, the orphans' fears.

Robert Glynn has pictured the roll call of such agents of misery in *The Day of Judgment*.

Here are they  
Whom fraud and skilful treachery long secured;  
Who from the infant virgin tore her dower,  
And ate the orphan's bread:—who spent their stores  
In selfish luxury.

In the spirit of Hogarth, Somerville in *Bowling-Green* draws a picture of Gripe, the lawyer, who is jovial with the fat client,

But if the abandoned orphan puts his case,

\*

How like a cur he snarls.

Armstrong refers in *Benevolence* (1751) to a whole family of orphans who ought to be snatched from fate. Scott's *Palemon, or Benevolence*, is a moral lecture to prosperous farmers in the valley of Avon. In *The Melancholy Evening* he states that to the feeling heart it is a joy to alleviate pain and relieve poverty, but

Avarice grasps his useless store,  
Though Misery's plaints his aid implore,  
Though he, her ruined cottage nigh,  
Beholds her famished infants lie,  
And hears their faint, their last expiring cry!

After the middle of the century the reader begins to suspect the genuineness of the orphan who is mentioned with clock-like regularity in connection with the charity motive. The conventional attitude is not felt in Thomson because he is warmed by a fine benevolence, and has the additional advantage of being a pioneer; but constant repetition of what seems like a colorless reference palls on the modern reader until he wonders whether these poets could have made an impression even in their day. But the benevolist poetry, which grows in force after Rousseau and the industrial revolution, still clings to the orphan as a favorite figure for pathos.

Langhorne's *Country-Justice* (1774—1777) calls attention to the fact that unnumbered

objects ask thy honest care,

Beside the orphan's tear, the widow's prayer.

He too wishes to alleviate the distresses of poverty by restraining the wealthy from wanton cruelty. He resents the intrusions of landscaping and architecture in rural places, and plainly addresses city people of wealth as "ye apes of modern race" and "ye reptile cits," and writes that Plutus may growl over his ill-got gains, while Mercury, the god of stealth, and Janus, the shopman with double face, perch upon ledgers of city merchants. In the pretentious towers of the nabob he sees razed villages, "And tears of orphans watering every tree."

His chief concern is to overcome the injustice committed upon society by the failure of courts to recognize the good qualities of man, so that a verdict is given or sentence pronounced upon an evil-doer without reference to motives which prompted the deed. In one of the ancient halls which he prefers because they do not harbor a class of heartless rich (he refers to the capitalists who bought up land to compete with the landed nobility) stands a magis-



terial chair from which true justice is dispensed by a stern but just judge who displays

Honor's strong beam, and Mercy's melting shade;  
Justice, that, in the rigid paths of law,  
Would still some drop from Pity's fountain draw;  
Bend o'er her urn with many a generous fear,  
Ere his firm seal should force an orphan's tear.

Langhorne is in earnest. He wishes to have justice dispensed in a way that Shaftesbury would have approved.

Henry Headley's *Rosalind's Dying Complaint (to her sleeping child)* is a poem of eleven stanzas, in which the unmarried mother weeps over her babe whose "cruel far-off father" has left her to face unkind friends and cruel parents. Headley has frankly treated his subject in a vein of sentimentalism. Unlike the vigorously human mother in the Elizabethan lyric on the same theme, Rosalind does not face her guilt, but lays her misfortunes to the injustice wrought by organized society. She does not long forget herself in the plight of her child, but blames the "ungentle hand of rude mischance" that has reft her heart of rest. She is awakened not so much to mother instincts as to a sense of innocence not recognized in her environment. Her mother will not hear her speak, and her father knits his brow. "Sweet Heavens! were they never young?" Her friends forsake her and smile when she thinks of her "true love" who broke his word. The sentimental shift of responsibility from the individual to society is clear in her exclamation,

May God amend their cruel hearts,  
For surely they're to blame.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In *Frederick* (1794), Southey's sentimental standard, which is implied in the "Botany-Bay Eclogues" generally, leads him to portray Frederick as shifting the blame for his faults to society, even in the act of praying for forgiveness from God.

If I have sinned against mankind, on them  
Be that past sin; they made me what I was.



Headley is interested in this phase of the subject, and the child is hardly more than a text for preachment of sentimental doctrine of the individual abused by society. Rosalind wakes but to weep while she kisses her baby's "pretty hand," and hears in the midnight tolling a call to the "grass-green sward." Therefore she makes no brave fight for life to protect her child, but succumbs to forces at work against her.

Alas! my dearest baby  
 I grieve to see thee smile;  
 I think upon thy rueful lot,  
 And cold's my heart the while.

'Gainst wind and tide of worldly woe,  
 I cannot make my way;  
 To lull thee in my bosom warm,  
 I feel I must not stay.

Jerningham's *The Magdalens* (1763) engages "soft-eyed Pity" in the cause of fallen women who have been rescued by Hanway's house of charity. They fell through no fault of theirs.

Once destitute of counsel, aid, or food,  
 Some helpless orphans in this dome reside,  
 Who (like the wandering children in the wood)  
 Trod the rude paths of life without a guide.

They had been won to evil by persuasive words that moved their generous nature, and were hurried into situations which "their inborn virtue disapproved."<sup>1</sup> Though early

<sup>1</sup> Compare *The Prostitute* of H. K. White:

Once wert thou happy—thou wert once innocent:  
 But the seducer beguiled thee in artlessness,  
 Then he abandoned thee unto thine infamy.

stained, they now claim a second innocence which is, however, disturbed by memories of past suffering. One of the unfortunates recalls how she had been abandoned to wander in the storm with her helpless babes, who died of hunger; and she still cries out in agony of soul against her seducer. Jerningham appeals to man's humanity not to deride them now or to mock their undeserved penitential woes.

'Tis Virtue's task to soothe affliction's smart,  
To join in sadness with the fair distrest;  
Wake to another's pain the tender heart,  
And move to clemency the generous breast.

Jerningham's *Margaret of Anjou, An Historical Interlude*, illustrates how a wave of sentiment was made to engulf the audience. The advertisement says: "This historical interlude is upon the same plan that Rousseau composed his *Pygmalion*, which is a new species of dramatic entertainment consisting of a monologue that is often suspended by the interposition of music, which must sympathize with the passions and feelings of the personage who is supposed to speak." After a lost battle Margaret leads in her child, who falls asleep under a tree while the mother, "hanging fondly over him," relates his woes. When the child wakes, he asks for his slain father. A ruffian bent on pillage enters at this moment, but is moved to compassion by the mother's appeals for humanity, and reforms on the spot.

Jerningham, whose old age carried him over into the new century, is characterized in Gifford's *Baeviad* as "sniveling Jerningham," and is depicted as weeping at the age of fifty "o'er love-lorn oxen and deserted sheep." But that his poems served the practical purposes of reform is evident from the statement of Hanway, who credits him with

having materially aided by his poetry in the establishment of the Magdalen House.<sup>1</sup>

Two poems by H. K. White are sentimental studies. *A Ballad* depicts a "heart-sick weary wanderer," whose "faithless lover" cruelly left her "faint and lone" after she had been disowned by her parents.

My child moans sadly in my arms,  
The winds they will not let it sleep:  
Ah, little knows the hapless babe  
What makes its wretched mother weep!

Now lie thee still, my infant dear,  
I cannot bear thy sobs to see;  
Harsh is thy father, little one,  
And never will he shelter thee.

Oh, that I were but in my grave,  
And winds were piping o'er me loud,  
And thou, my poor, my orphan babe,  
Wert nestling in thy mother's shroud!

*The Lullaby of a Female Convict to her Child (The Night Previous to Execution)* is typical, both in choice of subject and treatment, of the desire to shield an unfortunate

<sup>1</sup> Jonas Hanway was a friend of children. In 1761 he obtained an act which obliged all London parishes to keep an annual register of parish infants; and another act by which such infants within the bills of mortality must be housed not in a workhouse, but, until they were six years of age, beyond a specified number of miles outside London. In 1759 he published *A Candid Historical Account of the Hospital for the Reception of Exposed and Deserted Young Children*, and *Thoughts on the Plan for a Magdalen House for Repentant Prostitutes*. How closely poetry is wrapped up with humanitarian reform is clear from the relation of Jerningham to the project of Hanway for rescuing fallen women. (Consult Dictionary of National Biography, s. v. Jerningham, Edward.) In 1766 Hanway published *An Earnest Appeal for Mercy to the Children of the Poor*, and in 1767 *Letters on the Importance of the Rising Generation of the Labouring Part of Our Fellow Subjects*.

mother. White does not arouse sympathy by mere comment, but appeals to the reader's sensibilities by reproducing the mother's words. Unlike those of Headley's Rosalind, the mother's thoughts are wholly absorbed in her child, whom she addresses, and whose fate she bemoans. The closing stanza is characteristic of the whole poem:

Sleep, baby mine—Tomorrow I must leave thee,  
And I would snatch an interval of rest:  
Sleep these last moments ere the laws bereave thee,  
For never more thou'lt press a mother's breast.

The sentimental shift of responsibility is obvious in sentimental comedy and domestic tragedy. In Aaron Hill's tragedy *The Fatal Extravagance* (1721), the hero's misdeeds are sympathetically palliated by reference to evil companionship in youth. Through his generosity, Bellmour had allowed himself to be lured into evil ways. His appeal to his wife is made not for himself:

Thine and thy helpless infants' woes rise to me,  
Glare on my apprehension like pale ghosts,  
And point me into madness.

Although the problem of the tragedy centers about the fate of Bellmour, the parental emotions of Louisa and Bellmour lead them to speak constantly of their children. When she realizes that he has gambled away their fortune, she thinks only of her husband, and says to his uncle,

How, then, will he support the weeping anguish,  
Of three poor children, all undone by him?

Courtney wishes he might shield her, but Louisa is moved only by Bellmour's distress, and trembles at the thought of looking upon his face:

His ruined family hangs on his heart,  
His helpless children's future state distracts him,  
And the once lively Bellmour smiles no more.



Bellmour is moved by the thought of his poverty-stricken children:

To die at once,  
Were comfort even in agony.—But I shall be,  
Whole ages, after death, in dying—Villains,  
Dull, pitiless, insulting, dirty villains,  
Will point at some poor ragged child of mine,  
And say, "There's pride and name! . . .  
There's the blest remnant of a boasted family!"

Writers of domestic tragedy until late in the century were prompt to shield the weakness of a fellow man and to see evil as a shade of good which man but faintly comprehends. Since the days of the miracle play *Abraham and Isaac*, children had been employed in tragedy to heighten effect. Yet writers of domestic tragedy in the eighteenth century show no advance over their predecessors in the treatment of the child element.<sup>1</sup>

George Lillo's apprentice tragedy, *The London Merchant, or the History of George Barnwell* (1731) was played yearly before apprentices until the days of Charles Lamb, who remarked upon its easy morality. Lillo has changed the deliberate villain of the ballad into a merchant's clerk who is led on by the courtesan Millwood to embezzle money and murder his uncle. In his crimes, Maria, the daughter of his employer Thorowgood, can see only the results of misguided innocence. The sincerely penitent Barnwell is executed, but has not lacked the sympathy and affection of his fellow clerk Trueman, Maria, and her father, who to the end have confidence in the goodness of his heart. Trueman says to Maria, "So well I know him, I'm sure this act of his, so contrary to his nature, must have been caused by some unavoidable necessity." Thorowgood de-

<sup>1</sup> Compare Addison's extended ridicule of weeping widows with orphaned children in tragedies. (*Spectator*, No. 44.)

nounces Millwood: "I know how, step by step, you've led him on, reluctant and unwilling. . . . But Heaven, who knows our frame, and graciously distinguishes between frailty and presumption, will make a difference, though man can not, who sees not the heart, but only judges by the outward action."

The new standards, then, influenced dramatists and poets alike. The dramatists Hill, Lillo, Benjamin Victor, and Cumberland were working in the same mood as Jerri-ingham, Headley, Southey, and White.<sup>1</sup>

Langhorne strikes at the root of the problem of charity. He is not content to stop with superficial charity that strives to ameliorate conditions by gifts of food and clothing; but he endeavors to remove the causes of poverty and distress by educating country justices to note motives and environment as influences that must be taken into account if an intelligent judgment is to be pronounced. Before making his decision, a judge must determine whether the deed was prompted by vice or nature, and must take into account "the strong temptation and the need." Justices must learn to know conditions which caused distress, in order to relieve it. They can remove the cause by themselves hearing the testimony of unfortunate cottagers, in place of turning them over to petty rascals like parish officers.

Langhorne is especially concerned with the inhumanity of parish officers, who, as is known from other sources, played a shameful part as agents in farming out helpless children to industrial establishments. He looks upon the parish officer as a monster furnished with a human frame. The magistrate should "shake the reptile soul" of such a

<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of other sentimental plays of the eighteenth century, but without special reference to childhood, see Ernest Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility*.

"caitiff wretch." Langhorne knows of a landowner on whose estates no bailiff wields petty power. The master himself looks to it that the sick have medicine and the aged bread. To illustrate his faith in human nature, Langhorne cites the instance of a "pitying robber" who came upon a new-born babe under a thorn and

To the next cot the trembling infant bore,  
And gave a part of what he stole before.

He was a stranger in the community; but he had the instincts of a man, and "dropped a human tear." On the other hand, the penniless mother of this child had received cruel treatment from parish officers who had driven her far "beyond the town's last limits."<sup>1</sup> Langhorne's standards of justice demand that the magistrate should pause "if Virtue's slightest sparks remain." He is the sole protector of unpitied women, and should consider well before committing them to the "shameless lash" and the "hardening jail." The dictates of humanity require that he be forbearing.

The downcast eye, the tear that flows amain,  
As if to ask her innocence again;  
The plaintive babe, that slumbering seemed to lie  
On her soft breast, and wakes at the heaved sigh;  
The cheek that wears the beauteous robe of shame;  
How loath they leave a gentle breast to blame.

Langhorne's poem touched hearts long after its publication. This is evident from his biographer's statement: "It would be difficult to find anywhere lines more affecting than those which in the first part describe the soldier's widow weeping over her child. The benevolent spirit which pervades the whole of the poem cannot be too warmly praised."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Parish officers were especially cruel in instances like this.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life of John Langhorne*, by R. A. Davenport, Esq., in *The British Poets* (Chiswick), 1822, Vol. LXV.



Cowper was familiar with the sufferings of cottage children from having assisted Newton in charitable work. At his own winter evening fireside, Cowper enjoys the peaceful cozy recess and the calm which restore him to himself while the storm is raging without. On such a night the poor have a "friend in every feeling heart." There is irony in his statement that the ill-clad and sparsely-fed peasant who is heated by his day's labor finds time to cool in his cottage. Cowper's heart goes out to the children clustered about the ineffective fire. Close observation is reflected in the pathetic lines which show how they warmed their hands by the insufficient aid of a candle flame.

The frugal housewife trembles when she lights  
 Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,  
 But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.  
 The few small embers left she nurses well;  
 And while her infant race, with outspread hands  
 And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,  
 Retires, content to quake, so they be warmed.  
 The man feels least, as more inured than she  
 To winter, and the current in his veins  
 More briskly moved by his severer toil;  
 Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.  
 The taper soon extinguished, which I saw  
 Dangled along at the cold fingers' end  
 Just when the day declined. . . .

\*

Sleep seems their only refuge: for, alas!  
 Where penury is felt the thought is chained,  
 And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few.<sup>1</sup>

Where he fails to sympathize with robust children at play, his inmost soul is moved by the distress of children suffering from hunger and cold.

<sup>1</sup> *The Task*, IV, 380—398.



Two of Cowper's most successful pictures of childhood reveal sympathetic observation of children suffering from cold. In *Truth* there is an effective portrait of a boy out at service to an old maid. Cowper is obviously amused by the "ancient prude" and her shabby gentility, but is in full sympathy with the incongruously dressed and freezing boy. Without the footnote reference to Hogarth's *Morning*, it is evident that Cowper's conception of the boy and his pious mistress is in the mood of Hogarth. Although given to thrift and parsimony,

She yet allows herself that boy behind;  
The shivering urchin, bending as he goes,  
With slipshod heels, and dewdrop at his nose,  
His predecessor's coat advanced to wear,  
Which future pages yet are doomed to share,  
Carries her Bible tucked beneath his arm,  
And hides his hands to keep his fingers warm.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Although the lot of apprentices must have been unusually hard because of long hours and close supervision, poets before Blake have not noticed them with any show of sympathy. Blake's two poems on chimney-sweepers notice the lot of what Lamb called these "dim specks—poor blots—innocent blacknesses" who "from their little pulpits (the tops of chimneys), in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a lesson of patience to mankind." Lamb sentimentalizes his observation of these poor children. As a child he had pursued them in imagination as they "went sounding on through so many dark stifling caverns, horrid shades"—to shudder with the idea that "now, surely, he must be lost forever." Lamb does not as much as allude to the cruelties to which these climbing boys were subjected. It is known that their masters forced them into chimneys by prodding them with sharp instruments and even by building a fire under them. When James Montgomery of Sheffield edited *The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend, and the Climbing Boy's Album* (1824) in order to stimulate philanthropic interest in legislation favoring these abused children, Lamb sent in, as his contribution, Blake's poem from the *Songs of Innocence*, which carried the heading "Communicated by Mr. Charles Lamb, from a very curious little

Like Langhorne, Cowper notices dishonest parish officers, who are partial in the distribution of charity. His cottagers would rather suffer the pangs of hunger than submit to the "rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs" of knaves in office. He cheers them with the hope of assistance from his household; a distant benefactor, who can be identified as Lord Carrington, will keep them from want. Their hope may also lie justly in their children:

Time will give increase,  
And all your numerous progeny, well trained  
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,  
And labor too.

Cowper, whose humanitarianism was prompted by evangelical fervor, makes a plea like that of Langhorne. He considers the instance of a thief who steals by night to feed his family. Cowper holds that there is some excuse for him if pity for their sufferings warps aside his principles, and tempts him into sin for the support of his destitute family. But having gone so far, Cowper feels it necessary to balance the scales by a vigorous denunciation of the villian

Who starves his own, who persecutes the blood  
He gave them in his children's veins, and hates  
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love.

Thomas Russell is likewise thinking in terms of religious belief when he chides a young man for not being moved to sympathy by cottage children.

Could then the babes from yon unsheltered cot  
Implore thy passing charity in vain?

work." Late in the eighteenth century, Joseph Blacket, a Yorkshire poet, strikes a personal note in *Reason's Address to the Poet*, in the opening stanzas of which he refers to his apprenticeship to a cobbler:

Child of mischance! by fortune's favourites spurned,  
At distance from the good, the truly great,  
In broken accents my hard lot I mourned,  
In sighs lamented my unhappy fate.

Russell follows orthodox theology by postponing the reward of the distressed cottagers to a future world.

Too thoughtless youth! what though thy happier lot  
Insult their life of poverty and pain.  
What though their Maker doomed them, thus forlorn,  
To brook the mockery of the taunting throng,  
Beneath the oppressor's iron scourge to mourn,  
To mourn but not to murmur at his wrong.  
Yet when their last late evening shall decline,  
Their evening cheerful, though their day distressed,  
A hope perhaps more heavenly bright than thine,  
A grace by thee unsought and unpossessed,  
A faith more fixed, a rapture more divine  
Shall gild their passage to eternal rest.

The benevolists differ from poets like Cowper and Russell in that the benevolists, whose attitude is conditioned by Shaftesbury's doctrine of natural goodness, did not postpone redress to an unknowable future. They insisted that the benevolent instincts of man should be given free play in this life in order that all men may be partakers of the happiness which their maker intended they should enjoy.<sup>1</sup> Because of the natural goodness and instinctive benevolence which he ascribed to man, Shaftesbury had definitely attacked the "rod and sweetmeat" doctrine as unnecessary and, in fact, harmful. Scott of Amwell is conscious of a cleavage between himself and those who believe, for instance, in predestination. The optimistic quaker poet apologizes for sentiments he expresses in *The Melancholy Evening*. The following lines from that poem clearly reveal the temper of those who followed Shaftesbury. Scott has been writing of the plagues of helpless mankind—fear,

<sup>1</sup> Cowper was apparently disturbed by the views of men like Richardson, who was, in his estimation, not making sufficient allowance for faith. See *An Ode (on reading Mr. Richardson's History of Sir Charles Grandison.)*



despair, ambition, guilt, avarice—and has shown how famished infants die in the sight of Avarice. If man must bear the reign of these plagues, he had better never have been created.

Say, will Religion clear this gloom,  
And point to bliss beyond the tomb!  
Yea, haply for her chosen train;  
The rest, they say, severe decrees ordain  
To realms of endless night and everlasting pain!

Where Cowper's extended and faithful transcription from cottage life makes a sure appeal for a consideration of the children of the poor, but at the same time does not go beyond the symptoms of poverty, the benevolists, by striking at fundamental causes, go to the root of the evils of poverty, and wish to remedy conditions that cause poverty. Cowper has visualized cottage children with knees together before the scanty fire, but he has not recognized the odds against the cottager in the surrounding circumstances for which he can not be held responsible.<sup>1</sup>

The feeling heart of Burns responded sympathetically to the sufferings of the poor. *The Ruined Farmer* (1777) represents his father at Mount Oliphant. It is evident from Burns's autobiography that the farm had proved a ruinous

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth seems to recognize a difference between the teaching of the Church and that of Nature. In the first book of *The Excursion* he tells how the "Scottish Church" had held (with a "strong hand of purity") the Wanderer and those "With whom from childhood he grew up." But whatever the Wanderer had imbibed of "fear or darker thought," the "native vigour of his mind" had "melted all away":

Sometimes his religion seemed to me  
Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods;  
Who to the model of his own pure heart  
Shaped his belief, as grace divine inspired,  
And human reason dictated with awe.



bargain: "My father was advanced in life when he married. I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labor. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more; and to weather these two years we retrenched expenses."

The poem is conceived as a meditation. "The sun is sunk in the West." His father is sore beset with sorrow and grief over his poverty, which awakens thoughts of misery while he sits by the fire and listens to the tempests that blow about the cottage. Not long ago he had been in a position to relieve distress; but now he can with difficulty earn enough to support his wife and children. He looks upon his sleeping wife, whose cares are for a moment at rest. He is in despair over having brought her so low.

There lie my sweet babies in her arms;  
No anxious fear their little hearts alarms;  
But for their sake my heart does ache,  
With many a bitter throe.

He is embittered to the verge of welcoming the grave as a refuge from the ills of fortune. The thought of their dependence arouses his manlier self:

But then my wife and children dear—  
O whither would they go!

Although he does not know which way to turn, "All friendless, forsaken, and forlorn," he must endure. Although there can be no rest or peace, the mute appeal of his children stirs the father heart in him, and he takes new courage to face the morrow.

In *The Cotter's Saturday-Night* (1785) Burns indirectly attacks luxury and the haughty lordling's pride by doing his best to paint an appealing picture of the simple life of the cotter. Fundamentally the poem is motivated by Burns's contempt for lords. City and country life are contrasted in

the thought that the poet's friend Aiken, even though his worth had not become known, would have been happier in a cottage. In order to scale down "the lordling's pomp," he portrays "The native feelings strong, and guileless ways" of an honest toiler and his family, who represent sturdy democratic virtues. Although Burns succeeds in emphasizing idyllic elements while he sings "The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene," they have not altogether crowded out harsher facts that throw light on the hardships and privations of the cotter and his family.

The chill November wind blows as the toil-worn cotter, his "weekly moil at end," plods across the moor. As he comes in sight of his cot, his younger children,

Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through  
To meet their "dad," wi' flichterin' noise and glee.

He is cheered by his thrifty wife's smile, and sits before the "wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie."

The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,  
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,  
And makes him quite forget his labor and his toil.<sup>1</sup>  
Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,  
At service out, amang the farmers roun';  
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin  
A cannie errand to a neibor town:  
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,  
In youthfu' bloom—love sparkling in her e'e—  
Comes hame; perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,  
Or deposite her sair-won penny fee,  
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

<sup>1</sup> Compare *The Poor Man's Prayer* by the Rev. Dr. Roberts of Eton:

While I, contented with my homely cheer,  
Saw round my knees my prattling children play;  
And oft with pressed attention sat to hear  
The little history of their idle day.

Time passes swift-winged until a strapping lad who calls on Jenny is received by her parents. They are happy in the thought that their "bairn's respected like the lave." Then the cottager's simple fare is set out for supper. It consists of wholesome porridge, "chief of Scotia's food," and milk from their only cow which is chewing the cud beyond the kitchen wall. (As a special treat the mother brings out from her storeroom a ripe cheese she had treasured for such an occasion. After this frugal supper the family form a wide circle before the ingle, and with serious mien listen to the father, who with patriarchal simplicity reads from the "big ha'-bible." They sing hymns compared with which "Italian trills are tame."

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;  
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:  
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,  
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,  
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,  
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,  
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,  
For them and for their little ones provide;  
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

Although the children are happy and their parents thrifty, the veil of sentiment does not altogether obscure the harsher facts of the cotter's anxiety and the not too remote contingency of hardship against which Jenny deposits her sorely-won penny. The emphasis is not on social or economic conditions of the Scotch cotter, but on his sturdy honesty and God-fearing qualities. Even these, Burns fears, are endangered by new conditions which, "From luxury's contagion, weak and vile," threaten to infect the "hardy sons of rustic toil" who make Scotland "lov'd at home, rever'd abroad."



Although idyllic in his treatment, Burns is not blind, even in this poem, to the distressful poverty of cottagers. Several poems indicate that he is a son of the Revolution. His fiery attacks on class privilege are conceived in the mood of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. In *Two Dogs* (1786) he mercilessly holds up the vices of the ruling classes, and swells the chorus of condemnation directed against petty officials. The unfortunate poor must endure meekly the abuses of a gesturing, cursing factor who threatens to distraint their effects. In the language of the dog Caesar, the gentry care as little for delvers, ditchers, "an' sic cattle," as he does for a soiled badger. In *Man was made to Mourn* (1784) Burns protests against the sacrifices of the poor man who labors to support "a haughty lordling's pride." A manuscript variant makes the accusation specific. On a cold November evening the poet meets a toil-worn old man. In the course of protests against conditions that oppress this man, Burns calls attention to the overworked laborer who finds it necessary to beg a brother man to give him leave to toil,

And see his lordly fellow-worm  
The poor petition spurn,  
Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife  
And helpless offspring mourn.

Burns was himself oppressed by anxiety over his children. In a letter to Mrs. Dunlop (1793) he quotes the opening stanza and the chorus of "an old Scots ballad," and comments on his own poverty.

O that I had ne'er been married,  
I wad never had nae care,  
Now I've gotten wife an' weans,  
An' they cry "crowdie" (food) evermair.



Ance crowdie, twice crowdie,  
Three times crowdie in a day;  
Gin ye "crowdie" any mair,  
Ye'll crowdie a' my meal away.

"I see a train of helpless little folks—me and my exertions all their stay. . . . If I am nipt off at the command of fate, even in all the vigor of manhood. . . . Gracious God! . . . what would become of my little flock?"

The *Address to Beelzebub* (1786) definitely suggests the biting sarcasm and vitriolic attacks of Paine. Burns ironically commends the Earl of Breadalbane's endeavors to frustrate the attempt of five hundred highlanders to escape to Canada from their lawful masters, "whose property they are." They were living in abject poverty and squalor, and wished to better their condition. Burns ironically urges the Earl's agents to activity, and notices the degraded state of children who suffer with their elders. He mockingly invites the Earl to visit his cottage, where Burns will dignify him by seating him at the ingle-side "'Tween Herod's hip an' Polycrate," a seat which, the poet observes, he well deserves. The language of Burns is as unsparing as that of Paine, and as harsh as the lines of Hogarth when he pictures the squalor and rags of London brats in Gin Lane. If the Earl does not wish his people to keep their native Highland spirit, he should have his agents "smash them" into chips, or let the bankrupts rot in the jails. As for the children:

The young dogs, swinge them to the labor;  
Let wark an' hunger mak them sober!

And for the girls he advises, in the cynical mood of their superiors, that if they are seemly they should be sent to Drury Lane to be lessoned.

An' if the wives an' dirty brats  
 Come thiggin at your doors an' yetts,  
 Flaffin wi' duds, and grey wi' beas,  
 Frighten away your ducks an' geese;  
 Get out a horsewhip or a jowler,  
 The langest thong, the fiercest growler,  
 An' gar the tattered gypsies pack  
 Wi' a' their bastards on their back!

The gentle protest of the sentimentalists here takes on the fire of those who like Paine protested with colloquial vigor in the spirit of the Revolution.

Among the poets before 1800, Southey had most fully awakened to the suffering brought upon children by war. Southey does not see the glamour of war. His heart suffers with the innocent victims in cottage homes. Extended development is found in *The Soldier's Wife* (1795), in which he catches up the war motive to give it independent treatment in a full-length group portrait of the widow and her children. She is wearily trudging along the highway with her children.

Sorely thy little one drags by thee barefooted;  
 Cold is the baby that hangs at thy bending back,  
 Meagre and livid, and screaming for misery.

Woe-begone mother, half anger, half agony,  
 As over thy shoulder thou look'st to hush the babe,  
 Bleakly the blinding snow beats in thy haggard face.<sup>1</sup>

Ne'er will thy husband return from the war again;  
 Cold is thy heart, and as frozen as Charity;  
 Cold are thy children.—Now God be thy comforter!

Southey's *Victory* (1798) contrasts with the nation's wild rejoicing over a naval victory the sadness of the home which has lost a sailor father who had been forced by lawful violence

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge composed the second stanza.

From his own home and wife and little ones,  
 Who by his labor lived; that he was one  
 Whose uncorrupted heart could keenly feel  
 A husband's love, a father's anxiousness;  
 That from the wages of his toil he fed  
 The distant dear ones, and would talk of them  
 At midnight when he trod the silent deck  
 With him he valued,—talk of them, of joys  
 Which he had known,—O God! and of the hour  
 When they should meet again. . . .

Man does not know what a cold sickness chilled the widow's blood when she heard tidings of the sea fight; nor does man know with what dread she listened to the names of those who died:

Man does not know, or, knowing will not heed,  
 With what an agony of tenderness  
 She gazed upon her children, and beheld  
 His image who was gone.

Southey is not merely writing about war, but endeavors to realize concretely the effects of war in the cottage home. Instead of merely referring to the widow, he attempts to analyze her emotions as stirred by her children. Imaginative presentation has taken the place of incidental reference. The thought of children as the "image" of their parent has been taken from its conventional setting in complimentary verse, and has been made an emotional force in an already tense situation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Complaints of the Poor* (1798) depicts a soldier's wife, seated by the roadside, with a baby at her back and an infant at her breast. *The Soldier's Funeral* (1795) combines the orphan, mother, and love of home motives. Compare also Southey's *Humphrey and William* (1794), and Wordsworth's lines on Margaret in Book I of *The Excursion*.

Southey notices childhood in his *Sonnets* (1794) on the slave trade, and in the poem *To the Genius of Africa* (1795); and Hannah More has piercing lines in *The Black Slave Trade*.



Southey's deep humanitarian concern over the injustice which man has done to man through war finds classical expression in *The Battle of Blenheim* (1805). It is the finest flowering of the war motive in the treatment of childhood. With imaginative realization he combines an objectivity that makes the children and their grandfather real human beings. It was a master-stroke to take Peterkin and Wilhelmine at evening play near the cottage of their grandfather Kaspar on the battlefield of Blenheim, and to record their unconscious protest against warfare. At last, after a century of incidental notice of the widow and her orphans, children have emerged to protest in their innocent childlike manner against the makers of war. By an objective realization of the predicament in which Kaspar finds himself after the naive questioning of the children, who do not understand the abstract "greatness" of a general like Prince Eugene but who insist on the fundamental "why," Southey has brought home his point. In true child spirit, Peterkin and Wilhelmine, who are unconscious of the full significance of their questions, solve the problem with a finality that is not possible in the argumentative attack. Southey was not toying with his subject. That his interest in the situation is not merely literary is clear in the light of the deep humanitarian interest he displayed on the subject of war, especially in *Victory*. This poem is closest to *The Battle of Blenheim* in its insistence on the hollowness of popular acclaim in the face of destitute children who must pay with their sufferings in the miseries of privation.

### III

The problem of charity in relation to childhood became increasingly acute because of the growth of industrial centers which, with the congestion of population, presented



new problems that men had not faced even in London. The center of gravity in English life was shifting to the cities, so that there was increasing danger that poets, who felt an instinctive antagonism toward city life, would lose touch with affairs. Yet long before industry became centered in cities, it had been carried on in households throughout Britain. The development was from home industry to factory industry; and long before children were employed in factories, they had worked on loom and wheel in the home. From Gay to Wordsworth, poets have noticed the spinning industry as it was carried on in cottages. Although children are not always specifically mentioned in this connection, numerous allusions indicate that the practice of employing cottage children was universal in the eighteenth century.

The epic of English commercial supremacy in the eighteenth century is interwoven with the didactic lines of John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757), which gives rules for the care of sheep, to be sure, but at the same time broadens out into a consideration of the foundations of English commerce. It is significant for this study that Dyer incidentally notices the problem of children in their relation to the flourishing spinning industry.

He is proud of Albion's greatness, but while contemplating her success does not ignore hardship and suffering, which were on the increase. In his endeavor to accentuate the practical value of his program, Dyer paints a rosy picture of smiling countrysides, and glories in the prosperity of magnificent seaports crowded with forests of masts. In the course of his discussion of flourishing city communities he calls the roll of industrial centers which are familiar enough now, but which were new in his day, such as Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, and "merchandising Hull." He has his eye on the economic trend of

events when he records that country people are crowding into cities in search of "tardy-rising wealth." Dyer sees facts from the point of view of one who is interested in social reconstruction.<sup>1</sup>

*The Fleece* is motivated by a desire to increase the happiness of English people through the salvation that comes from industrious labor. Dyer sees intemperance, the foe of labor, at his dastardly business of deluding ignorant workers into leaving honest industry, with consequent poverty and suffering. As he rises to a climax in a passage on the malicious workings of this eighteenth-century bolshevik, he notices the suffering unjustly entailed on children. As a matter of fact, thirty years before Crabbe, though not to the same extent, Dyer called attention to the problem of filth and squalor in cottage homes:

cease

The loom and shuttle in their troubled streets;  
 Their motion stopped by wild Intemperance,  
 Toil's suffering foe, who lures the giddy rout  
 To scorn their task-work, and to vagrant life  
 Turns their rude steps; while Misery, among  
 The cries of infants, haunts their mouldering huts.

His enthusiasm is all for the "felicities of labor." He would stimulate activity until the "sounding loom" mixes with the "melody of every vale." If the worth and contentment that go with honest toil were recognized, the sun would shine in every cottage home. The weaver's shuttle is a

<sup>1</sup> In *Agriculture* Dodsley sees only the "ruddy maid" whose "dexterous hand" twirls her wheel; and Cowper, although noticing the spinner's "scanty pittance," prefers to find ideal contentment and rural felicity in her heart, which is as light as her purse. Where Scott and Cowper are conservative or tend toward idyllic insistence on the happiness of the cottage spinner who "jocund chants her lay" while "whirling" her "circling wheel" beside the cottage door, Dyer does not ignore harsh realities.

"flowering shuttle," and cities are "glad cities of the loom." Not content, like Scott and Cowper, to stop with idyllic glimpses that ignore the shade for the sunshine, and not moved, like the benevolists, merely to cry out against man for the injustice which especially in that age he has done to his fellow man, and not satisfied to give only his sympathy to poor cottagers, Dyer offers constructive suggestions for the betterment of conditions. He does not stop with charity that ignores the causes of misery, but he points the way to a solution that will remove those causes.

His directions for the ambitious youth who would acquire a loom are specific. When the machine has been installed, the industrious youth lays in a store of soft yarn. He smooths the threads of the warp by stringing them along the garden walk. Then he sits down to his work and guides the "thready shuttle" skilfully as it glides from hand to hand. Various kinds of weaving are explained. There is a realistic description of a "noisy fulling-mill," and an equally detailed picture of activities at the dyeing vats. Dyer is far ahead of contemporary men of letters in his appreciation of the poetic possibilities of machinery, the enthusiasm for which leads him to a belief in its efficacy as an agent of social uplift.<sup>1</sup>

When Dyer considers the charitable aspects of organized industrial activities of the poor, he offers the workhouse as a remedy. He would have the nomadic poor find a "house of toil" in every parish, where unwilling hands would be taught the art of wool combing, carding, and spinning. His description of institutional activities is so

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Henage Dering, Dean of Ripon, in a topographical poem *Reliquiae Eboracenses* (before 1750) had portrayed in Latin hexameters the activities of Roman artisans who fabricated arms and weapons at Sheffield where "A thousand hearths at once intensely glow."



optimistic that one fails to recognize the workhouses which, dating from "Eliza's" reign, were hateful to an independent, liberty-loving people, however poor. Although the reference to Queen Elizabeth would seem to indicate the traditional workhouse, it is sometimes difficult to know whether he has in mind the newer type of workhouse called the House of Industry, which was in existence in 1757, or whether he is in reality thinking of the traditional institution and writing of it in the more attractive terms of the House of Industry.

Before proceeding to a glowing account of an English establishment, Dyer persuasively calls attention to the happy contentment and useful lives of the inmates of a Belgian workhouse. In assorting the different grades of wool that grow on a single fleece, the Belgians excel all nations. Why can not England, with a superior quality of fleece, excel the Belgians? The moral of the example is that children are able to perform the delicate task, and ought therefore to be employed as they are in Belgium. He sees

e'en childhood there  
Its little fingers turning to the toil  
Delighted: nimbly, with habitual speed,  
They sever lock from lock; and long from short,  
And soft and rigid, pile in several heaps.

When, later, he turns to a "spacious dome" in England, he chooses a workhouse in the vale of Calder near Halifax. His vocabulary reflects his propagandist mood: "fair purpose," "gracious air," "gentle steps," "silent joy," "blithe," "sprightly scene," "delightful mansion." Although he insists on writing in a cheerful mood, underneath his optimism, which is not superficial or insincere, is felt the force of direct observation and first-hand acquaintance. He has seen children at work in these houses of charity.



The younger hands  
Ply at the easy work of winding yarn  
On swiftly circling engines, and their notes  
Warble together, as a choir of larks;  
Such joy arises in the mind employed.

This is probably the earliest notice of children at work on machinery outside the cottage home. Dyer's optimism is inspired by the novelty and wonder that come with the new direction of man's activities in group employment. Under the conditions which he observed in workhouses, children were still under the supervision of parents or at least of friends who lived with them in the daily routine of the establishment. Abuse of child labor came when children were taken out of the home to the factory, where foremen or watchers, who were interested only in amount of output, held them mercilessly to continuous activity during long hours of toil. As a result Dyer does not treat childhood as offering a separate problem: children are grouped, as he had observed them, with their elders.

About the time *The Fleece* was published, children were beginning to be segregated in Houses of Industry. As the traditional workhouses were farmed out to the lowest bidder, their management was bad. Little was being done to educate children who were inmates. Charitable individuals, and especially justices who faced deplorable conditions in the routine of office, were more and more alive to the evils of poverty. They also became increasingly aware of the inefficiency of traditional methods of poor relief, which did not strike at the root of the evil. As the problem was studied by enlightened men and women, the necessity of educating children to habits of neatness and industry became evident. These reformers were in fact working in the spirit of Dyer's *Fleece*. To supplement the efforts of the workhouse, and with the aim of ultimately doing away with

it altogether, Houses of Industry were erected by means of individual contributions and assessments on the poor rates. Wordsworth condemned their efforts in capital letters by referring to these houses as "misnamed HOUSES of INDUSTRY." But in Dyer's day they represented the most enlightened sentiment of charitable men and women. Many such houses were built in the sixties. And as they were in existence in Lincolnshire before Dyer published *The Fleece*, he may have had in mind one of these newer ventures in the relief of poverty. The same enthusiasm that prompted his fervid lines was felt by the founders of the new establishments.<sup>1</sup>

In these efforts to ameliorate social conditions through the education of children to habits befitting their humble station, the workhouse system was extended and modernized to meet the needs of children. The arguments employed by Dyer were used repeatedly in favor of the house of industry for fifty years after the *Fleece*.<sup>2</sup> The differences are those of emphasis. Later writers of pamphlets, although envisaging the problem as a whole, were especially concerned with childhood.

Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, which appeared thirteen years after *The Fleece*, develops sentimentally the theme of the evils of luxury as reflected in unjust oppression of the poor. Goldsmith sees the evil effects of enclosures of land to form new estates or to extend the old. As in sweet Auburn, familiar landmarks were often ruthlessly razed merely to make way for a prospect.<sup>3</sup> His attack on the misuse of wealth is veiled by the sentiment which

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *Oeconomy of Charity*, 1787-1801 (edition 1801), and Thomas Ruggles, *History of the Poor* (edition 1794).

<sup>2</sup> Dyer and later writers may have been indebted to Locke's scheme of "Working Schools."

<sup>3</sup> Compare Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*.

colors his reminiscent pictures of happy village life under old conditions. This weakens the force of the poem for social reform. From the time of its publication, readers have overlooked, in favor of the delightful reminiscence of a happy village life, the terrible social injustice which the poet recognizes as an historical fact.<sup>1</sup>

Although the misuse of power over helpless cottagers is not blinked, Goldsmith is careful to choose imagery that will not offend; harsh reality, where it threatens to break through, is prettily sentimentalized. The literary effect of the poem is accentuated by the fact that the reader is allowed to look upon village woes only as transmuted by the personality of the poet, who is kept in the foreground, and with whose personal woes the reader is made to sympathize. Goldsmith allows the reader to see only a happy childhood. He is sad, but the imagery drawn from childhood is pleasing. Children are at play on the green; they pluck affectionately at the gown of the village preacher; they laugh at the jokes and fear the frowns of the village schoolmaster. The poet's melting mood of unhappiness may sadden his recollection of childhood delights that can no longer be observed in villages which have been blotted from the landscape by a wealthy landowner; but the poetic sadness is not vigorous enough to counterbalance the idyllic mood in which the images of childhood are conceived.

In his choice of theme, if not in its development, Goldsmith does bear witness to the increased hardship suffered by children of the poor.<sup>2</sup> If the poem is read in the light

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller account of this phase of *The Deserted Village*, see *The English Village*, by Julia Patton.

<sup>2</sup> *The Poor Man's Prayer* by the Rev. Dr. Roberts of Eton definitely connects the suffering of cottagers and their children with the "tyrant lord" who, "armed with cruel Law's coercive power," evicts them.



of historical events which justify his sadness, the forgotten lines, which are not idyllic, take on a new significance.

Another poem, which was published thirteen years after *The Deserted Village*, and which was inspired by the kind of literary glozing found in Goldsmith's poem, supplies the ugly details which Goldsmith pictured only indirectly, and to which Dyer referred only in passing. Crabbe's *The Village* (1783) shows the facts of village life as they had appeared only incidentally in poetry. Although Scott of Amwell used the image of children playing with toy boats in the kennel's dirty tide, he belongs with Goldsmith to the school of poets who preferred to observe the pleasant features of village life. In a letter to Beattie, Scott is querulous over the realism of Crabbe's *The Village*. "The author of 'The Village' takes the dark side of the question: he paints all with a sombre pencil; too justly, perhaps, but, to me at least, unpleasingly. We know there is no unmixed happiness in any state of life; but one does not wish to be perpetually told so."

Crabbe is able to amplify the brutal facts which lie at the roots of Dyer's problem; but unlike the earlier poet, he is negative in that he suggests no specific remedy for social ills. *The Village* merely lays bare the repulsive conditions he observed in his boyhood haunts in and about the seaside village of Aldborough. He is impatient of pastoralties. When he sees the mid-day sun beating down on the bare heads of harvesters, he does not hide the grim realities of toil in "tinsel trappings." He will paint the cottage "as truth will paint it, and as bards will not." Poverty can not soothe the poor who pine for bread. Corydons still complain in poetry, but only of the pains which they never feel. In the grim actualities of contemporary life, peasants have had to leave their oaten reeds to follow the plough in a niggardly soil.

There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,  
And to the rugged infant threaten war.

Children and young folk do not play at rural games on the green. He cannot find there the simple life of nature: "Rape and Wrong and Fear usurped her place." Crabbe fled as soon as he could from his native Aldborough, where "guilt and famine reign." There nature was not friendly to man. The aged worker in the fields looks up to behold

The bare arms broken from the withering tree,  
On which, a boy, he climbed the highest bough,  
Then his first joy, but his sad emblem now.

Let him who dreams of rural ease and picturesque cottages, look within the cottages of the poor, and see children "round their feeble fire." They must be satisfied with a "stinted meal." Hardship drives many to poaching for food, and liquor causes brawls at inns where the father's weekly wage has been squandered. The drunken husband reels home to strike his "teeming mate."

Crabbe's poetry was influential in rousing people to the need of reform: excerpts from *The Village* were widely read by impressionable children in "Elegant Extracts" and "Poetical Extracts," which were used in the schools. Sir Walter Scott and Wordsworth were profoundly moved by his lines. Wordsworth wrote to Crabbe's son: "They will last, from their combined merits as Poetry and Truth, full as long as anything that has been expressed in verse since they first made their appearance." Crabbe is not writing in the mood of Dyer, so that in his workhouse the cheerful hum of wheels has become a mournful drone to the accompaniment of which there can be no voices of happy children singing like larks. Within its mud walls, and in the putrid vapors of unventilated rooms,

There children dwell who know no parent's care;  
 Parents who know no children's love, dwell there.  
 Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,  
 Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed;  
 Dejected widows with unheeded tears,  
 And crippled age with more than childhood fears.<sup>1</sup>

In *The Introduction to the Parish Register* (1807) Crabbe writes with greater minuteness and detail of the background portrayed in a general way in *The Village*. As he explores the annals of his parish poor, he fails to find records that suggest happy Eden or sweet Auburn in the want that keeps sunshine from the cottage gate. In the same year that Wordsworth published the *Intimations Ode*, Crabbe took as his theme the vice and misery of the "infected Row we term our street." There the sot, cheat, and shrew met each evening to dispute and riot; there one could nightly hear

the curse, the cries  
 Of beaten wife, perverse in her replies;  
 While shrieking children hold each threat'ning hand,  
 And sometimes life, and sometimes food demand:  
 Boys, in their first-stol'n rags, to swear begin,  
 And girls, who heed not dress, are skilled in gin.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the lines in *The Parish Register*:

Back to their homes the prudent vestry went,  
 And Richard Monday to the workhouse sent.  
 There he was pinched and pitied, thumped, and fed,  
 And duly took his beatings and his bread;  
 Patient in all control, in all abuse,  
 He found contempt and kicking have their use:  
 Sad, silent, supple; bending to the blow,  
 A slave of slaves, the lowest of the low;

\*

His were the legs that ran at all commands;  
 They used on all occasions Richard's hands:  
 His very soul was not his own. . . .



Amid sweepings from the door lie mingled masses of putrefying matter, into which sinks "disembogue" and through which kennels flow.

There hungry dogs from hungry children steal;  
There pigs and chickens quarrel for a meal;  
There dropsied infants wail without redress,  
And all is want and wo and wretchedness.

Crabbe wonders if the boys with bare bodies hardened and bronzed by the sun will "outlive the lack of care"; they will, if they can be forced to work on a farm. More degrading are the sleeping quarters where the beds are crowded into a single room:

Daughters and sons to yon compartments creep,  
And parents here beside their children sleep.

Sanitation is not known in such hovels. The gentle reader must endure, for the "true physician walks the foulest wards." There are frowsy patches on the floor, and there is downy dust beneath the window and round the posts of the bed on which lie tattered garments.

See! as we gaze, an infant lifts its head,  
Left by neglect and burrowed in that bed.

In 1785 Cowper, in his evangelical fervor, already bore witness to drunken brawls that disturbed the quiet of his country retreat on the banks of the Ouse, and noticed in *The Task* the drunken cottager who starved his children by squandering his wage at the village inn. In 1794 Blake's *Songs of Experience* depicted in *The Little Vagabond* a child who appeals to his mother by protesting that the church is cold but that the ale-house is warm and cheerful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The liquor problem in connection with incidental notice of childhood has been frequently noted in prose, and sometimes in verse. For prose, Defoe's *Colonel Jacques* is interesting. For poetry, in addition to passages already noted, there are: Edward

The eighties saw an unparalleled outburst of reform activities. Hannah More's *Sensibility* reveals clearly how sentimentalism was giving way to more practical considerations that are implied in Crabbe's willingness to see conditions as they exist. Sentimental poems and plays, and the sentimental attitude toward animals, had prepared the way for practical reforms in the interests of children; but merely literary sentiment is no longer justified in the face of man's realization of social conditions that appeal to the heart for practical reforms. The "graceful drapery Feeling wears," no longer satisfies the longings of those who wish to be of service to ill-conditioned children. Hannah More is out of patience with one

Who thinks feigned sorrows all her tears deserve,  
And weeps o'er Werther while her children starve.

Sarah Trimmer published her *Oeconomy of Charity* in its first form in 1787. Hannah More's *Mendip Annals*, which bears witness to her charitable work among the wretched cottagers of the Cheddar district, dates from the same period. Ruggles's *History of the Poor* reviews conditions from the sixties to the nineties in an effort to awaken the charitable instincts of Englishmen. It is not necessary to go to these prose sources for a portrayal of spiritual neglect that stimulated the efforts of Raikes and his followers in the Sunday School movement in the eighth decade, for Crabbe's fierce light had been focused on the abuses of the church in 1783. Village children suspend their games to view the funeral of their aged friend, but the mourners wait in vain until evening beside the grave. The busy priest is detained by weightier matters, and the poor

Moore's *The Owl and the Nightingale*; Mickle's *Syr Martyn*; Macneill's whiskey ballad *Will and Jean*; and the early *A dialog Between a Butcher and his Wife, after his return from the Ale-House*.

man's bones lie unblest. Hannah More found at Cheddar that the cottagers were all but totally neglected by the established church. Among the miners and glass workers of the Mendips she and her sister Patty observed children as wretched as those of Aldborough.

Raikes had to meet vigorous opposition, and Hannah More was thwarted at every turn by obstructionist policies. In the welter of social unrest that accompanied the Revolution, conservative or reactionary opinion was suspicious of all innovations. Men feared that the efforts of most charitable organizations were somehow bound up with Revolutionary propaganda, and broadly classified them as part and parcel of Revolutionary activities. It was feared also that Hannah More's plan would raise children above their natural social level and make them unfit as hewers of wood and drawers of water. It is known, for instance, from her journals and other sources, that some reformers doubted the wisdom of teaching children even to read, because reading might make them unfit servants.<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, who was a friend of children always, was moved in 1815 to protest against "systems which cramped childhood and held it artificially in restraint within the economic barriers set up as a result of class distinction." It is easy to see how his rugged mountain nature, bred even in school at Hawkeshead to freedom from close supervision, was temperamentally opposed to anything short of an equal opportunity for all English children.

Wordsworth, who insisted that freedom is the birthright of children, could not sympathize with a system that took the child as soon as the mother could spare him, and placed him

<sup>1</sup> A rich Cheddar farmer assured Hannah More that religion would be the ruin of agriculture, although he conceded that religion might be a good thing if it would keep children from robbing orchards. (*Mendip Annals*.)



in a House of Industry. Ruggles notes varying ages as low as three years, and repeatedly refers to children of five and six who assisted at the work of spinning. It must be remembered that Dyer's enthusiasm for the employment of children meant long hours from six in the morning to seven at night in summer, and eight in winter. A schoolmistress was employed to supervise the youngest children, and a master to teach the boys for an hour during the day. The long hours of supervised routine must have been deadening in their influence on spontaneous child nature, and the aim of teaching children machine-like habits of regularity was no doubt realized. The only variety to which boys might look forward was seasonal work in the fields. They were able to drill at planting time, or to assist at harvest. One's heart prompts the wish that there were many predatory wild birds near houses of industry, for it does the heart good to know that the little boys, who were being converted into automatons, were hired out to scare birds from the newly-planted fields and orchards. What a relief from dreary routine that lasted from sunrise to sunset—and after! In Dyer's time, and later to the days of Lancaster and Bell, houses of industry were, nevertheless, the expression of an honest effort to rescue children from conditions such as the poets have depicted.

Even in the houses of industry, however, there is to be noted a tendency to the exploitation of child labor. The unfortunate element lies in the fact that the work of children was expected to pay expenses "with an overplus." This expectation would easily lead to forcing the efforts of children, "as much work being required of each of them as they are reasonably to perform. . . . In conformity to the plans of our society, children from five or six years of age are assembled under the same roof, at an early and regular

hour of the morning, kept steadily to the purpose of business—taught that, even so early in life, they are *able to maintain themselves*." Like Dyer in 1757, Ruggles is concerned with increasing the wealth of the kingdom.

Sarah Trimmer, too, concerned as she is primarily with religious aspects of the child's welfare, falls nevertheless into the habit of computing the money value of work done by children. If only ten persons in each of the ten thousand parishes of England and Wales earned no more than a halfpenny a day for three hundred days in the year," the produce of their labor would at the year's end amount to 62,500 pounds"; and she notes that "the girls of the Foundling Hospital under their present excellent matron, earn one hundred pounds a year." She would, therefore, set all idle children to profitable employment, adducing the example of thrifty Dutch children who earn their keep and more by making toys, "which serves as an amusement, as well as a profitable employment."

She describes a charitable institution which is a modification of the House of Industry. In the Day School of Industry, the promiscuous mingling of adults and children, which had led to overcrowding and resulting abuses, was eliminated. As soon as charity workers realized that industrial life as represented in the House of Industry would destroy all sense of domestic life, day schools were urged for all except the wretchedly poor and orphans: "children commonly receive more harm than good, by being mixed together with men and women, and this is too much the case in Parish Workhouses." That the houses of industry were but one degree removed from these is evident from Ruggles, who observed that "the dormitory is too much crowded; three or four boys in a bed, two men; this number in one bed occasioned the air to be disagreeable to the smell."

Although one may be tempted to ascribe Chatterton's lines on cottage discomforts to literary heightening, Rugles gives evidence of the naked truth of the poet's conception, in a report of his visit to a sick cottager in whose household the cramped space precluded separation of children from adults, and the well from the sick.<sup>1</sup> He lays this to "that miserable economy in fitting up the cottage, which too generally has denied the only bed room, either a fireplace, or a casement window to ventilate the air; the noise of querulous children; the stench of confined air, rendered epidemic by morbid effluvia; the vermin too frequently swarming on the bodies and rags of the wretched inhabitants," such causes indicate a "depth of misery which hard labor and industry ought not in sickness to be liable to endure." The lines in Crabbe's *The Parish Register* read almost like a poetic version of such a passage. Crabbe sees as the chief cause of all this misery of children the mother's inability to "employ the vacant hour." In poets as in prose writers, remedial measures are almost invariably bound up with the thought of the spinning and weaving industry which Dyer had advocated as the salvation of the poor. The intolerable conditions from which Crabbe's children suffer are brought about by lack of thrift.

Here are no wheels for either wool or flax,  
But packs of cards—made up of sundry packs.

The aims and methods of teaching in the day school were the same as in the school of industry. The main interest lay in teaching manual work and regularity of habits. Children were taught in rotation for one hour each day to

<sup>1</sup> In a glass-blowing district, Hannah and Patty More entered a row of hovels, nineteen containing two hundred people—"both sexes and all ages herding together." (*Mendip Annals*.)



read the Bible and the Prayer Book. Referring to other studies, Sarah Trimmer held that there is no "absolute necessity for children of the lower order to learn these things at all." She excepts the ability to read the Bible, "for I regard it as a part of the *Birthright* of the Poor as *Britons*, to read the BIBLE in their native language; and esteem it the duty of their supervisors to see, at least, that they are enabled to do it." But the main purpose was to teach manual occupation. An ambitious boy was able under this system to rise to the position of head weaver at ten years of age, and after fulfilling the institutional requirement of teaching a successor, was entrusted with a position of responsibility in a manufactory, at an age when boys were as a rule first apprenticed.

Such charitable efforts in founding hospitals, schools of industry, and day schools of industry may not conform to present-day aims and ideals in humanitarian relief; but when studied in the light of factory employment of children, it will be realized that children in such institutions were in snug harbor: protected on the one hand from filthy moral and physical home conditions, and on the other from heartless industrial exploitation.

Ruggles reports of manufactories that "a sacrifice of health and morals is made . . . to pecuniary advantages. The children are crowded in close apartments, without any regard to their improvement, excepting in one particular branch of the Manufactory, for which probably their size will disqualify them after a few years, when they must give place to smaller children, and turn into the world unacquainted with any art, by which they may gain a future livelihood, and if they are females, ignorant of even the use of the needle, so necessary to be known by every wife and mother

in the lower ranks of life.”<sup>1</sup> Children did literally outgrow their jobs. The machines operated to advantage by them stood so near the floor that when the child had grown, he had made himself unfit for his work.

The numerous publications which make up the nineteen volumes of Hannah More's collected works indicate the class distinction which dominated all efforts at social relief. She wrote a well-received book for the education of a princess. Her stories for common folk were carefully divided into volumes whose titles indicate their clearly-defined audience. The conservative tendency of all labors in the interests of the poor is further emphasized by her *Village Politics*, which was highly praised by Walpole. It is a dialogue between Jack Anvil, the blacksmith, and Tom Hood, the mason, and was written to counteract Revolutionary principles which were making serious headway among the discontented poor. Addressed by Will Chip, a country carpenter, to all the mechanics, journeymen, and laborers in Great Britain, it had tremendous vogue in its day, and served its purpose in counteracting the subversive pamphlets and tracts that had found their way into workshops and coal-pits. The language was adapted to the class of readers it intended to reach. Her ballads, composed with the intent of answering the “foolish question” (which was often heard in labor circles during the Great War) “What have the POOR to lose?” in case of a French invasion, contain the likable *Ploughman's Ditty*. It is obviously propagandist in its idealization of cottage life, and hardly represents faithfully the class of wretchedly poor

<sup>1</sup> White's *Clifton Grove*:

The pale mechanic leaves the laboring loom,  
The air-pent hold, the pestilential room.

peasants with whom she was concerned in her charity work. She uses the return at eve of the father, together with an "atrocious" accompaniment:

On Saturday-night  
'Tis still my delight,  
With my wages to run home the faster;  
But if Frenchmen rule here,  
I may look far and near,  
But I never shall find a paymaster.

I've a dear little wife,  
Whom I love as my life;  
To lose her I shouldn't much like, Sir;  
And 'twou'd make me run wild  
To see my sweet child  
With its head on the point of a pike, Sir.

Among Sarah Trimmer's many examples of wretchedness and suffering, it is pleasant to read of the thrifty widow of Hasketon, in the County of Suffolk, who, upon the death of her husband in 1779, was left with fourteen children, the eldest fourteen years old. Going over the head of factors and rent collectors, she persuaded John Way, Esq., her landlord, to allow her to continue as cottager tenant at a rent of thirteen pounds a year. She refused to part with any of her children to a house of industry, and by the sale of milk, butter, and cheese from two cows, saw all her children either well placed in service or married to thrifty husbandmen. By training her eldest daughter to care for the younger children while she herself was selling her produce in the nearest market town of Waybridge, two miles distant, she had managed her brood so well that she could finally leave her cottage labor at the age of fifty-five years to take up the less arduous employment of nursing.



Such details of a happy ending to what in most instances would have been a calamity, give the reader of eighteenth-century poetry greater confidence in the sincerity of poets whose lines contain what may often seem to be a colorless reference to widows and orphans. The widow of Hasketon was one of the exceptions to general suffering because she secured a sympathetic hearing from the master over the heads of his agents. In the main, readers of poetry had come into contact with actual scenes of suffering which would make their hearts responsive to the poet's lines on benevolence. Such conditions, as is evident from the publications and reports of poor-relief societies, were faithfully portrayed by Crabbe. Conditions at Aldborough were essentially like those at Cheddar, both as regards physical squalor and spiritual atrophy.

Although Thomson's sympathy with suffering cottage children is as lively as that of Southey and Crabbe, he differs from poets like Dyer and Langhorne in that he seems like Cowper to be satisfied with alms and public institutions as the proper methods of ameliorating the condition of children. He appeals to man's sense of justice to relieve suffering humanity from the injustice which man works on his fellow man.

After the middle of the century, Dyer and Langhorne write in the spirit of the reforms advocated by Raikes, Mrs. Trimmer, and Hannah More. Where sentimentalism ended in an escape from the haunts of man, as in Bruce and Beattie,<sup>1</sup> and where it tended to throw a misty veil of sentiment over cruel facts, as in *The Deserted Village* and *The Cottor's Saturday-Night*, the deep sympathy of Dyer and Langhorne led to specific programs of reform that had as their

<sup>1</sup> Compare Lavina and Edwin.

object the removal of the causes of poverty. Dyer had advocated teaching the child habits of thrift and patient application as shields against intemperance and shiftlessness that bring suffering in their train. Langhorne was also working for the removal of the primary causes of misfortune when he appealed for an intelligent administration of the law.

By way of the Sunday School, Raikes struck at the root of the problem; and Hannah More, who left London salons and bluestockings for the children of miners and glaziers at Cheddar, held to fundamentals in her efforts to give them the benefits of the only vocational guidance known to the eighteenth century.

When applied to children in relation to their environment, Crabbe's accusation that poets ignored actual conditions in favor of pastorals, is not altogether accurate, unless the industrial abuses of child labor, which Crabbe himself did not notice, are included. Through their optimistic philosophy, sentimental poets were attracted by those elements in rural life which contrasted with the obvious vice and artificialities of city life. The charming pictures of cottage contentment and rural felicity to be found in poetry that notices childhood, must not obscure the fact that the benevolists were awake to actual conditions of suffering and poverty even in rural communities. The most idyllic of the cottage motives, the return at eve of the father after a day of labor, is most often pitched in a minor key. Even in *The Cotter's Saturday-Night*, where all is well with the children of the household, Burns has saddening premonitions of a change coming over the simple cottage life of his beloved Scotia. In the face of protests from Thomson to Burns, it cannot with justice be said that conditions under which children lived were not noticed by poets. Dyer's enthusiasm for his program of industrious

habits as the remedy for the ills of poverty, led him to advocate child labor in the spinning industry as carried on in public institutions. Children employed in organized industry had to wait until Grahame's *Birds of Scotland* and Wordsworth's *The Excursion* for poets who championed their cause, many years before Mrs. Browning wrote *The Cry of the Children*.



## CHAPTER IV

### EDUCATION

But thanks to those, whose fond parental care  
To Learning's paths my youthful steps confined,  
I need not shun a state which lets me share  
Each calm delight that soothes the studious mind.

Thomas Cole, *Ode to Contentment*.

As reflected in poetry, the history of education in the eighteenth century begins and ends with the conflict between the traditional methods of classical education and the utilitarian training advocated by John Locke and his disciples. A persistent attack on "cell-bred" discipline is revealed in poetry from Pope's *Dunciad* to Cowper's *Tirocinium*. After 1762, Rousseau's enthusiasm added impetus to the already widely disseminated doctrines of Locke. Poetic discussion of the moral aspects of education for children was influenced by the evangelical fervor of Whitefield and the Wesleys.

The combined influences of Locke, Rousseau, the sentimentalists, and those inspired by religious fervor, operated to break down the traditional curriculum and the methods by which it was administered. Poets are agreed with Locke and Rousseau in their stated preference for domestic education. They reflect also the widening interest in natural science, which went hand in hand with utilitarian propaganda. The violent attacks on established methods are essentially democratic in tendency in that they imply modifications to meet the needs of the masses in a closer approach to utilitarian standards. The desire to substitute for the traditional memoriter exercises a real knowledge derived from

direct observation of natural phenomena, ranges poets on the side of those who insisted that the child should be taught by observation of objects in nature. Although their attacks produced few tangible results in the established schools, in that they did not make themselves felt in the classical curriculum at all, popularization and simplification of text-books on arithmetic, geography, grammar, and natural history reflect a growing desire to meet popular needs. That the eighteenth century was mainly a period of transition and preparation is clear from a study of poetry from Pope to Cowper.

The instinctive objection to disciplinary education voiced by the early romanticist poets was occasionally reinforced by satirical thrusts of poets who belong to the classicist tradition. Sir J. H. Moore's *Written in a College Library* gives a satirical picture of the somnolent state of higher education. The poet has often seen an "ancient fellow" who, "free from the cares of children, noise, and wife," enjoyed smooth moments which are not tokens of a vigorous activity in educational affairs.<sup>1</sup> Although John Gilbert Cooper had been a pupil of Dr. Nicholls at Westminster, and evidently a close student of the classics at Cambridge, he preferred "contentment's humble lot" to the artificialities of court and school. His *Epistles (to his friends in town, from Aristippus, in retirement, 1758)* are unfavorable to schools. He prefers the guidance of his heart to the head work of pedants. His point of view is indicated by such phrases as "bookish rules," "hard with a comment's iron chain," "figures and bloated tropes," "three-legged syllogisms," "the bubble blowing race," and "grave pedantic train."

<sup>1</sup> Compare the *Autobiography* of Gibbon, *passim*, for conditions at Oxford.

Among the early romanticists, impatience of restraint is voiced in the extreme language of Chatterton, who looks upon the pedant as the "licensed butcher of the human mind," and who in *Happiness* (1770) makes the sweeping accusation,

O Education, ever in the wrong,  
To thee the curses of mankind belong.

Mickle glories in the uncontrolled impulses unknown to the victims of "schooltaught prudence and its maxims cold." As he treads "Cintra's summits" and views the scene where the Saracen was conquered, he prefers the vague glow with which the locality, "of name unknown," suffuses his soul. He feels in chivalry the dynamic power of the ideal. In *Knowledge* (1761) he scales down intellect in favor of emotion by scorning "lettered pride" and the boastful claims of "star-crowned science." Sages stray and grope in endless night: they can never be certain of their conclusions. He decides to pay "silent adoration" and to be "in wonder lost." Mason holds that education will serve but to "chill affection's native fires." Knowledge beyond what is necessary to save the individual from vice, will only multiply his cares. School routine was also uncongenial because it interfered with the free romantic development of individuality. Bruce's school girl, Lavina, was solitary in her habits. Beattie is unfavorable to formal instruction when he does not wish to mope over the schoolman's "peevish page," and exclaims,

Perish the lore that deadens young desire.

Instances might be multiplied, but it is clear that romantic tendencies were in a vague way opposed to organized education. Poets preferred not to endure the restraint of school life; confinement was irksome to the spirit which vaguely prompted their love of freedom.



Yet there is in Thomson's *Liberty* (Part III) a striking passage which indicates that it is better for the schoolboy not to be troubled by gleams of the ideal. Thomson argues that if man rose to a glimpse of ideal beauty, he would shrink up like a flower before the mid-day sun. The celestial regions to which *Liberty* retired after the decadence of Roman liberty are too bright to be viewed by man. The light is too keen for mortals; therefore, says Thomson, sacred be the veil that clouds the light. It is curious that Thomson, precursor as he is in so many ways of romantic tendencies, should have applied this thought to childhood.

A sense of higher life would only damp  
The schoolboy's task, and spoil his playful hours.  
Nor could the child of Reason, feeble man,  
With vigour through his infant being drudge,  
Did brighter worlds, their unimagined bliss  
Disclosing, dazzle and dissolve his mind.

The romanticists were ever trying to break through the literal fact to the spiritual meaning which it veiled. Wordsworth gloried in the fact that as a schoolboy at Hawkeshead he was "disturbed" by gleams of divine truth. It is evident, however, that as far as childhood is in his mind, Thomson was not ready to advocate romantic emotions that would set the child apart from his fellows because of a faculty of spiritual vision that made him "an eye among the blind."

There was little danger that the curriculum of eighteenth-century schools would develop mystic insight into a realm of romantic spirituality. The curriculum, in so far as it was noticed by poets, was condemned as lacking in the spirit that gives vitality to education. The general accusation was that schools emphasized the letter to the exclusion of the spirit. In the *Dunciad*, Pope conceives the goddess of Dullness as sending "Stupefaction mild" to every pupil.

Education made no attempt to impart real knowledge; but instead,

Beneath her footstool science groans in chains. (IV)

When Pope arraigns pedagogical methods in the fourth book of the *Dunciad*, he has in mind endowed schools, such as Winchester, Eton, and Westminster, which he specifically mentions. Schools of this type were on foundations that date back as far as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By the eighteenth century they were open only to sons of the nobility and the wealthy class. The curriculum was essentially the same as that intended for boys at the time of the Reformation. The course was based on Latin and Greek. Its ideals were disciplinary: the teaching had lost touch with life. During the seventeenth century, with the advent of natural science and the inductive philosophy of Bacon, there had been protests against exclusive attention to classical learning. Milton's letter to Hartlib had emphasized the need of correlating the curriculum with the practical demands of life. Locke's *Thoughts* (1693), although cautious in not condemning Latin and Greek outright, outlined a practical regimen for sons who were to be leaders in public life.<sup>1</sup> The objective was practical usefulness.

Pope catches the spirit of these writers in his ridicule of the conventional instruction given in endowed schools. The pedagogue argues before the throne of Dullness, that since man is distinguished from brutes by words, words are man's province. Therefore "Words we teach alone." The narrower way is always preferred in his system. Placed to guide youth at the door of learning, he never suffers it to

<sup>1</sup> Locke would have Greek studied by professional scholars only.

"stand too wide." As soon as a boy shows signs of mental awakening by asking questions,

We ply the memory, we load the brain,  
Bind rebel wit, and double chain on chain,  
Confine the thought, to exercise the breath,  
And keep them in the pale of Words till death.  
Whate'er the talents, or howe'er designed,  
We hang one jingling padlock on the mind. (IV)

The footnote informs the reader that these lines are "A recapitulation of the whole course of modern education . . . which confines Youth to the study of Words only in Schools." When a pupil shows an inclination toward investigation in natural science, the pedagogue turns the child's interest to trifles—makes of him a virtuoso. The "P. W." footnote states that Dullness is careful to charge the "Investigators of Nature to amuse themselves in trifles, and rest in second causes, with a total disregard of the first." The result of this slavery to words is a "trifling head and a contracted heart."

When there was danger of innovation in high places in the educational world, a sable shoal of "broad hats, and hoods, and caps" circled about Dullness and, as friends of Aristotle, championed traditional learning. As a matter of fact, the heads of the University of Oxford met in 1703 to censure Locke's *Essay of Human Understanding*, and to forbid its being read. The tremendous yawn of Dullness, which infects all the court, is explained to mean the schools, where, "though the boys are unwilling to sleep, the Masters are not." Yet in the face of such protests from Pope, the schoolboy was destined to continue "of painful pedantry the poring child."

Gilbert West's *Education* (1751) is an imitation of the form and diction of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and reflects the opinions of Locke on education. In fact, Locke in the guise



of a palmer conducts the children of the Fairy Knight through the kingdom of Custom to "Paedia's house." Their adventures in the domain of the fierce giant Custom, and their arrival in the valley where Paedia lies asleep, constitute the narrative with which West has bound up his attack on the classical curriculum. Alluding to Locke's preoccupation in *Thoughts* with the earliest stages of childhood, West praises the eminent philosopher for holding up his "faithful light" before the uncertain feet of children.

Ne with the glorious gifts elate and vain  
Lock'd he his wisdom up in churlish pride;  
But, stooping from his height, would even deign  
The feeble steps of infancy to guide.

During their wanderings in search of Education, the pilgrims come to a roaring flood stained by "infant gore." Beside it stands a "birchen grove" that with "its bitter juice empoisoned all the flood." After fording this cruel stream into which children were being lashed ("By nurses, guardians, fathers, dragged along"), they come to a landscaped garden which is the seat of Learning. Nine virgins who sit there in "mimic majesty" preside over "every learned school." They affect antiquities even in their dress, are blind to the charms of modern knowledge, and scorn the language of their country. They mourn over the "rubbish of Rome and Athens," gathering up each little scrap, "however foul or torn." They are so enamoured of antiquity that

Ne sacred Truth herself would they embrace,  
Unwarranted, unknown in their forefathers' days.

They are vassals of the giant Custom, who endeavors to take in the knight's son. In place of the usual compliance the knight attacks the giant. Hard pressed, Custom summons his followers, who are fainthearted and timorous-minded at best. He had trained them from infancy to "hug

his chain"; he had craftily persuaded them to revere both the good and the noxious, the rational and the vain, as "institutions sage and venerable." Therefore they were seized with terror at sight of the knight and his children,

Attended by that palmer sage and bold,  
Whose venturous search of devious truth whilere  
Spread through the realms of Learning horror drear,  
Y-seized were at first with terrors great;  
And in their boding hearts began to fear,  
Dissentions factious, controversial hate,  
And innovations strange in Custom's peaceful state.

The knight and his train are hissed as they ride on in their survey of the domains of Custom, where the knight could observe nothing sound or wholesome. Although he saw that Custom's vassals declined the "wine-stained board Of beastly Comus," they had nevertheless resigned their hearts to idle joys.

As the knight would not have his son breathe even this "sweet contagion," he turned aside from the beaten paths to a majestic mountain on the side of which is a thickly-shaded grove. There the light was mellow, as though the sun's rays had passed "Through windows dim with holy arts pourtrayed." They came upon a venerable matron, asleep, whom the knight addresses as "fair island queen" and "mother of heroes," and who is none other than Paedia. Upon hearing the knight, she awakes from her melancholy trance and appeals to the nobles of Britain to realize their responsibility as leaders of the people. At this point West almost wholly abandons his archaic vocabulary in the ardor of his appeal to the nobles to join in overcoming the abuses of the giant Custom. He sees a time when wisdom and virtue will again come to the land, once the yoke of "cell-bred discipline" has been thrown off. Paedia will then re-

ascend her throne, surrounded by "vivid" laurels and "fragrant" flowers; while "yon supercilious pedant train" must be by her

Y-taught a lesson in their schools unknown,  
 'To Learning's richest treasures to prefer  
 The knowledge of the world, and man's great business there.'

The utilitarian nature of West's thesis reflects the poet's knowledge of Locke's *Thoughts*, which is concerned with preparing a young nobleman for a responsible position in the state. The prophecies of Paedia are clearly in the name of utilitarian education. But West, however strong and direct his stand against the humanities, does not mean to be radical to the extent of complete substitution of a modern course. Although the knight is revolutionary in that he succeeds in carrying his son through the domain of Custom into the valley of progressive realities, Paedia reveals not so much radicalism as a conservative liberalism that would retain whatever squares with virtue and vital knowledge in the ancients. This is to be

Joined with whatever else of modern date  
 Maturer judgment, search more accurate,  
 Discovered have of Nature, Man, and God.

Pope and West have much the same objective; both poets are keenly aware of the need of reform that shall modify contemporary overemphasis on word study. Where West's Paedia pleads for a course that shall combine modern subjects with those of ancient days, Pope's Dullness, who is disturbed by unmistakable signs of a desire for innovation, sighs for a pedant king like James I, who will rule a court with Latin ("stick the doctor's chair into the throne"), a king who will "Give law to Words, and war with Words alone" (*Dunciad*, IV).



John Langhorne also turns from the study of words to the observation of nature. His *Inscription on the Door of a Study* tells the student who would enter there to come with an open mind. He must forget his pedantic lore,

And all that superstition, fraught  
With folly's lore, thy youth has taught—

\*

Leave it, and learn to think again.

As he turns over volumes of the "mighty dead" he must remember that authors are human beings and that first "from Nature's works we drew our knowledge." Langhorne advises the man of inquiring spirit to enter "yonder grove" if he wishes to find true knowledge. This advice is in harmony with the questionings and injunctions of Defoe's *Complete English Gentleman*. Defoe had asked, "But is it worth any gentleman's while, as Oldham says, to go seven years to the Grammar Bridewell (the school) and there beat Greek and Latin?" Defoe's answer is, "The knowledge of things, not words, makes a scholar." Langhorne writes in *The Enlargement of the Mind* (1763) of the

dull inmate of pedantic walls,  
On whose old walk the sun-beam seldom falls,  
Who knows of Nature, and of man no more  
Than fills some page of antiquated lore—

\*

Something of men these sapient drones may know,  
Of men that lived two thousand years ago.

Such men despise the "better knowledge of the world" and scorn the man who looks about him on nature. Langhorne seems to have had a vision as early as 1763 of a course of study that would embrace natural history, including the study of man. In place of the "sages boasting o'er the wrecks of time" he would make nature the preceptress of

children. In this respect he is in advance of Locke, who had urged mainly that the child should not be loaded with memory work but be made to think and reason for himself. Langhorne leans toward doctrines like those of Rousseau, who condemned language study for children except in the mother tongue, and who wished to substitute knowledge based on direct observation. Langhorne would have children and men look about them; he wishes them to open their eyes and understand the visible world. Nature is to him a "sacred guide."

See on each page her beauteous volume bear  
The golden characters of good and fair.  
All human knowledge (blush collegiate pride!)  
Flows from her works, to none that reads denied.

Attacks on the humanities were strengthened by the aid of those who, like Joseph Priestley, would substitute scientific curiosity for traditional interest in the classics. Priestley is convinced that at Warrington Academy the instruction is "too scholastic, consisting of those studies which were originally thought requisite to form the divine, and the philosopher only, and had no direct view to civil and active life; and yet the greater part of our pupils were not intended for any of the learned professions." He expresses the point of view held by men of the century, like Bentham, Blackstone, and Adam Smith, whose influence on educational theory was wholly in the direction of useful knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The scientific researches of Priestley and others were noticed by poets. John Scott is overwhelmed by the immensity of the new stores of nature which science has opened up. They are vast "beyond what e'en a Priestley can explore." Mason's *Ode to Mr. Pinchbeck* notices the "pint of Priestley's air." Lovell calls for Priestley's wand. He would like to "tame the storm . . . with calm expectant joy" like Franklin, who could "in viewless channels shape the lightning's course." Mason gives "sagest Verulam"

The lack of adequate text-books hampered the study of science among children. A boy at school had practically to remain a virtuoso for lack of teachers or books to guide him in his observations of plant life.<sup>1</sup> This is illustrated in the experience of Sir Joseph Banks, who was a companion of Captain Cook on the voyage of the "Endeavor" to Australia. When, as a pupil at Eton, he was returning alone from bathing, he observed the beauty of flowers by the hedgerow in the lane. Although determined to study botany, he could find no one to teach him except the old wives of the neighborhood. During a holiday he came upon Gerard's "Herball," and carried it back in triumph to Eton. Such an experience makes it easy to see why Pope was moved to ridicule the attempts of teachers to sidetrack the interest of boys in natural history.

credit for banishing "childish vanity" from the groves of learning. Bacon is looked upon as the prophet of unborn science. Wilkie likewise notices him as the dispeller of "Gothic night" and as the "dawning light":

When ignorance possessed the schools  
And reigned by Aristotle's rules,

\*

A man was taught to shut his eyes,  
And grow abstracted—to be wise.

Mickle reflects the new enthusiasm for natural science in *Knowledge*. He joys to trace with Boyle how matter takes ten thousand forms in metal, plants, and worms. And Soame Jenyns, after flying with Newton "O'er all the rolling orbs on high," traces the mazes of nature with "labouring Boyle," and with him admiringly observes "matter's surprising subtilty."

<sup>1</sup> John Scott had often searched the pages of Linnaeus.

"The Scamian sage, whose wondrous toil,  
Had classed the vegetable race."

On the poet's botanizing excursions, Linnaeus must have been his chief reliance.



After the middle of the century, text-books showed a tendency to meet the interest of children in the world about them. In view of the dominating position Newton holds in the estimation of poets, it is not surprising to find as early as 1754 *A Plain and Familiar Introduction to the Newtonian Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> Newberry included in his "Circle of Sciences" an attractive book on Newtonian philosophy (1761); Tom Telescope, a young student, explains the laws of mechanics with the aid of familiar objects. Many publications show a tendency to simplify and popularize general science. Mrs. Trimmer in 1780 wrote *An Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature*, in which she gives Isaac Watts credit for stimulating her to write for children in such a way as to interest them in birds, animals, fish, insects, and flowers. John Aikin's *Calendar of Nature* (fourth edition, 1785) is dedicated to Mrs. Barbauld and reflects the nature lessons of Rousseau's *Emile*. William Mavor's *Natural History* (1800) is the best volume on the subject for use in schools. Priscilla Wakefield's *Introduction to Botany* (1796) illustrates the tendency to write books on separate phases of the general subject.<sup>2</sup> In the last quarter of the century, Cowper is abreast of his age. He conceives it to be one of the chief delights of a parent to give his child vital knowledge based on direct observation:

<sup>1</sup> Newton is mentioned, and almost deified, in scores of passages from Thomson to Wordsworth.

<sup>2</sup> For references, especially to books not available on this side of the Atlantic, I am indebted to a very interesting study: *L'éducation en Angleterre entre 1750—1800 Aperçu sur l'influence pédagogique de J. J. Rousseau en Angleterre. These . . . pour le Doctorat de l'Université Présentée à la Faculté des Lettres de Paris par Jacques Pons. Paris, 1919.*

To show him in an insect, or a flower,  
Such microscopic proof of skill and power,  
As, hid from ages passed, God now displays.<sup>1</sup>

In order to make the subject matter of these studies comprehensible to young minds, it was essential to study the mother tongue. Both Pope and West had deplored the lack of attention to the vernacular. Their attacks were specifically supported by Thomas Sheridan's prose treatise on *British Education; or The Source of the Disorders of Great Britain* (1756). The title page informs the reader that the prevailing evils are the "natural and necessary consequences of the present defective System of Education," by which Sheridan means the classical curriculum. He repeats the same arguments already noted in the *Dunciad* and West's *Education*. His constructive plan follows the cue of West's observation that the muses who presided over the springs of learning despised their native language. Sheridan attempts to show that "a revival of the art of speaking, and the study of our own language might contribute, in a great measure, to the cure of these evils." He turns the conventional arguments employed in favor of the classics, to show the practical value of an intelligent and systematic study of the mother tongue. He argues that everyone will acknowledge the need of effective public speakers in Parliament and on the forum, and that, as is clear from the essays of Addison and others, clergymen are in need of proper training in the mother tongue if they are to read the service in such a way that the Establishment may retain a vital hold on the masses. Pope's lines on the dismissal of students, after a purely theoretical schooling, had incisively summarized the evil:

Then, blessing all, "Go, Children of my care!  
To Practice now from Theory repair." (*Dunciad*, IV)

<sup>1</sup> *Tirocinium* (636-38).

Byrom likewise realized the evils resulting from inattention to correctness and power in the use of English. This is evident from his strictures in *Advice to the Rev. Messrs. H——— and H——— to Preach Slow*, which emphasizes the need of training.

What is a sermon, good or bad,  
If a man reads it like a lad?  
To hear some people, when they preach,  
How they run o'er all parts of speech,  
And neither raise a word, nor sink,  
Our learned bishops, one would think,  
Had taken schoolboys from the rod,  
To make ambassadors of God.

Poets and prose writers are alike alive to the shortcomings of the prevailing system, which does not prepare boys for the duties of life.<sup>1</sup>

Sheridan sees a way out of the difficulty. He admits that English has lacked stability; but Doctor Johnson's Dictionary may now serve as a standard. True stability, he continues, can result only from thorough teaching of English in the schools. He is convinced that "nothing can be a greater national concern than the care of our language," and concludes that the schools should labor to secure in their scholars a facility, clearness, and elegance by daily exercise in their own language. And as the art of speaking can be acquired only with difficulty, it must be taught in the schools by "study, precept, and example." These contentions are in harmony with Pope's doctrine in the *Dunciad*. It seemed odd to Pope that the young graduate could on the grand tour forget his classical acquirements, in Italy of

<sup>1</sup> Compare Swift's *Letter to a Young Clergyman*.



all countries. If he found no practical use for them on classic ground, they could be of little value to him at home.<sup>1</sup>

Walpole's comment on the great applause accorded the Eton boy's English address of welcome to the King and Queen in 1762, indicates the drift toward a recognition of the mother tongue. "It was English, which is right. Why should we talk Latin to our kings rather than Russ or Iroquois?" Prior had felt the need of apology for the English *Prologue* (1695) spoken by the Westminster schoolboy, Lord Buckhurst, at a performance of Dryden's *Cleomenes*. The boy hesitated to welcome friends of the school "in poor English." On the other hand, half a century later, Byrom's *Verses* for the Manchester Free Grammar School in 1748, on the occasion of the breaking up of the school, shows that six boys spoke in English and only one in Latin.

The attack on the classics was humorously carried forward by Cawthorn in *Wit and Learning, an Allegory*<sup>2</sup>:

Each schoolboy sees, with half an eye,  
The quarrels of the Pagan sky.

Before he was six years old, the boy played a thousand waggish tricks; he drilled a hole in Vulcan's kettles, broke a prong from Neptune's trident, and stole the favorite sea-knot of Amphitrite. The waggery of this child is presented with a gusto that betrays the poet's sympathies.

Cawthorn's allegorical poem *The Birth and Education of Genius* traces the progressive stages of a child's education. After Genius had learned to read at the dame's school, his father Phoebus experienced difficulty in finding a suitable tutor: there were too many dullards "among the doctors of Parnassus,"

<sup>1</sup> Dropped the dull lumber of the Latin store,  
Spoiled his own language, and acquired no more.

<sup>2</sup> *Spoken at the Anniversary, 1757* (at Tunbridge School).

Who scarce had skill enough to teach  
Old Lilly's elements of speech.

Finally, however, Phoebus came upon Criticism, who spoke "pure Latin, and your Attic Greek": he was in fact the admiration of his college. He could detect the slightest literary flaw; old authors were his bosom friends. Versed in all the trifles of antiquity, he wrote learnedly, like Bentley, on the origin of whistles. Apollo was glad of all his lore; yet, careful of his son, he more than suspected

That all this load of erudition  
Might overlay his parts at once,  
And turn him out a lettered dunce.

The question of classical studies is brought forward in Robert Lloyd's *Epistle to J. B. Esq.* (1757). Lloyd, who had been an usher at Westminster, desired a natural education for youth. A "truant from the pedant's school," he would rid himself of antiquated rules. The artificiality and stiff formality of classical teaching were uncongenial to him.<sup>1</sup> He scorns pedants

Who waste their time, and fancies vex  
With asper, lenis, circumflex,  
And talk of mark and punctuation,  
As 'twere a matter of salvation.

In *Genius, Envy, and Time*, a fable *Addressed to William Hogarth, Esq.*, he confesses himself to have been a worshipper of truth from his earliest years, and as a result scorns

<sup>1</sup> Had Shakespeare crept by modern rules,  
We'd lost his witches, fairies, fools:  
Instead of all that wild creation,  
He'd formed a regular plantation,  
A garden trim, and all enclosed,  
In nicest symmetry disposed.

the "gloss of knowing fools" who follow mechanical precepts. This attitude is revealed also in a scornful couplet in *A Dialogue*:

Or give the Roman proper word  
To things the Romans never heard.

The foregoing criticisms were focused on the curriculum in schools that were feeders to the great universities. The course of study was intended for boys who were ambitious, like the son of Thomas Warton's Gloucestershire divine, to wear a gown or to enter one of the professions. In the *Progress of Discontent* (1746), Warton has the son brought to the university, his chief reliance being "Horace by heart, and Homer in Greek." In the same way when Graeme was stimulated by the thought of preferment through the channels of education, he traveled the only safe road, that of the classics. His *Student* reveals the thoroughness and patience with which he had applied himself to the established routine:

Fired with the prospect, I embraced the hint,  
A grammar borrowed, and to work I went;  
The scope and tenor of each rule I kept,  
No accent missed me, and no gender 'scaped;  
I read whate'er commenting Dutchmen wrote,  
Turned o'er Stobaeus, and could Suidas quote;  
In lettered Gellius traced the bearded sage,  
Through all the windings of a wise adage.

In view of contemporary customs it was reasonable that such conscientious efforts should have raised high hopes that "some modern Laelius" would single him out for advancement.

As Winchester, Eton, and Westminster were closest to the universities, their curriculum, method, and text-books were as a rule adopted by outlying grammar schools. This resulted in a uniformity of preparation that facilitated the



matriculation of students at Oxford and Cambridge. To accomplish this purpose, only the traditional subjects were taught; the original intention of the founders was pretty strictly adhered to. Grammar schools throughout England had been founded like the school at Hargrave, near Chester, "for the government, education, and instruction of youth in Grammar and Virtue."<sup>1</sup> From the Cathedral School of Gloucester it was reported that "the classical education pursued here is from the rudiments of Latin and Greek to the extent of Sophocles, Euripides, etc., and the best of Latin authors." Kingston in Hereford frankly reported that the "general classical routine necessary for qualification of youth for the Universities is carefully pursued." At Ashford in Kent "the master is not required to teach them writing or arithmetic or any other branch of literature, except the Classics." The report from Wotton in Gloucestershire indicates how local conditions were modified according to the preferences of the master: "The Westminster Latin and Greek Grammars are used, and its plan of education is at present pursued, the Master having formerly been a scholar upon that Royal Foundation." Smaller schools that did not always carry the boy through the upper school, easily adapted themselves to the individual student; at least it would seem so from the report of High Wycombe (Bucks.), where the Eton Latin and Greek grammars were used "unless a boy is intended for Westminster or any other Public School, where other grammars are preferred." Sometimes, however, the Regulations definitely prescribed the routine, as at Wilton (Chester), where we find: "5th The Eton Grammar, and no other, shall be taught." Occasion-

<sup>1</sup>This and the following quotations are taken from that invaluable compilation *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England and Wales* by Nicholas Carlisle, two volumes, London, 1818.

ally the master has written the Latin and Greek grammars. This is the case at Reading (Bucks.), where the Rev. Dr. Valpy was head master. In his school the system of education was nevertheless founded upon those of Westminster, Eton, and Winchester "with such alterations as expedience and locality render necessary."

A comparison of the authors a boy was required to read reveals no fixed number or sequence.<sup>1</sup> The extensive drill in Latin syntax and prosody required two lessons in the morning and two in the afternoon, together with evening exercises. English verses were supplied for translation into Latin. It could not have been the rule in all schools to supply the matter of these verses, for there is something pathetic in the traditional request of the lower-form boys, "Please give me some sense." At Appleby Parva, after Greek had been taken up, the course was arranged so as to give "Latin prose in the morning, and Latin poetry in the afternoon." Clara Reeve reports (1799) that in a certain school two evenings a week were given to reading English classics so that the boys might know something of their native language while they were learning the dead ones. But she adds, "a trouble that few schoolmasters take upon them."<sup>2</sup>

After he had read Cicero and Homer, the boy wrote Latin verses without having the matter supplied. No doubt Cowper was thinking of prizes offered for excellence in Latin verse when he wrote in *Table Talk* that at Westminster

little poets strive  
To set a distich upon six and five.

<sup>1</sup> Compare in addition to Carlisle, *op. cit.*, the *Autobiography* of Samuel Johnson.

<sup>2</sup> *Destination: or Memoirs of a Private Family* by Clara Reeve (in three volumes, London, 1799), vol. I, p. 77.

As a boy he had been a poet at Westminster, and had been made "proud with silver pence." In a letter to Unwin he tells how in a day-dream he fancied himself again at school to receive the reward of a silver groat that was sent from class to class for the admiration of fellow students. At Eton the master granted a weekly half holiday if some boy had composed Latin verses worthy of being inscribed in gilt. This boy was sent up to the master to ask for the holiday.

Saturday exercises included for the older boys the translation of the *Catechism* and the *Thirty-nine Articles*, "with Welchman's notes," into Latin. After the long list of Latin and Greek books and compilations the boy was expected to master, it sounds like grim irony to be told that such a course "generally proves as much as a Boy's stay at School admits of." It is of such extended formal drill in parsing and conjugation that Locke says, with an eye to the practical, "A great part of the learning now in fashion in the schools of Europe, and that goes ordinarily into the round of education, a gentleman may in good measure be unfurnished with, without any disparagement to his affairs."

It is one of the complaints of Cowper in *Tirocinium* that boys are kept at these schools too long, with the result that the younger boys are corrupted by imitating the vices of the boys of sixteen and eighteen.

Schools, unless discipline were doubly strong,  
Detain their adolescent charge too long;  
The management of tyros of eighteen  
Is difficult, their punishment obscene (218—221).

As a matter of fact, children were admitted to these foundations as soon as they could read the New Testament in English, usually at the age of six. They might remain, ordinarily, as in the instance of Congleton (Chester), "as long as Parents please." Usually the statutes give "no



specific time of superannuation," although at Hereford scholars might not remain after sixteen, and at Tiverton (Devon) not after eighteen, while at Eton, boys are not acceptable before eight or after eighteen. Even at Eton, then, the course might drag out to ten years. It is small wonder, in view of the lack of touch in the curriculum with vital affairs of life, that West should think of boys as wasting fruitless hours while "hid in studious shades"; and the round from grammar to Latin verses and back again naturally led him to say that "irksome and long the passage was." Richardson's opinion that "a great deal of precious time is wasted to little purpose in the attaining of Latin," simply shows that the novelist was at one with the poet and philosopher in their attack on the classical curriculum.

Churchill's trenchant lines in *The Author* convey the bitterness of his recollections of childhood days spent in the acquisition of dead languages. He was destined by "cruel parents" for the church "ere it was known that I should learn to read." He was made to bear the "slavish drudgery of the schools." He misspent the precious hours of his youth in climbing the steep and rugged ascent of learning, only to find at the top that it were better to forget the little he had learned at the barren spot called a school. Jago's *Labour and Genius* (1768) contains vigorous satire on the blindness of pedagogues. Jago's caustic lines condemn the leveling of all natural talent in the merciless routine of grammatical instruction. The boy of genuine parts has no opportunity of showing his superiority to the dull plodder who goes through prose and song "insensible of all their graces," and is learned in words alone. Happy recollections of his friendship with Shenstone at Solihul do not enhance, even with the lapse of years, the "painful toil"

and the "dull, tiresome road" through "Priscian's crabbed rules."

For the gloomy conception of the teaching profession outlined in *The Author's Apology*, Lloyd might have taken as his theme the statement in the *Vicar of Wakefield*: "I have been an usher at a boarding school myself, and, may I die by an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be an under-turnkey in Newgate." The poem gives the impressions of a poet who had been an usher at Westminster. With the bitterness of his friend Churchill he writes that if he wished to avenge himself on his enemy, he could inflict no greater injury than to make him a "tool of learning" in the form of an usher. Lloyd can not endure the thought of "working on a barren soil" and laboring incessantly to "cultivate a blockhead's brains."

Oh! 'Tis a service irksome more  
Than tugging at the slavish oar.  
Yet such his task, a dismal truth,  
Who watches o'er the bent of youth.

While earning a paltry stipend, the teacher sees his pupils prosper by use of their talents; but as for his own progress in learning,

No joys, alas! his toil beguile,  
His own lies fallow all the while.

The evidence of poets and prose writers points clearly to free use of liquor by masters and ushers. The Provost of Eton in 1781 is described as one of the fat and gouty divines whose fondness for port and cheerful company is greater than his love of education. Cole, the antiquary, used to have routs in his college apartments at Eton, the college court being filled with carriages and tumults "not much to the edification of a place of education." Jenyns makes "vicar" rhyme with "liquor," and every reader of

eighteenth-century fiction knows what the novelists thought of drinking parsons. In *Clarissa Harlowe*, Lord M. writes to Lovelace that if he finds one of his tenants sober on the occasion of Lovelace's marriage, "Pritchard shall eject him." A study of Gillray, Rowlandson, and Hogarth will convince the most skeptical that Cowper was justified in his statement that the "government is too much interested in the consumption of malt liquor." When Defoe spoke of England as a "drunken nation from lord to tenant," he probably thought also of schoolmasters. Goldsmith was willing that schoolmasters should puzzle their brains over grammar while he drank good stout liquor that gave his genius "better discerning"; but schoolmasters also indulged in the privilege of stimulants. The potation penny contributed by children at term end was probably put to the use for which it was intended. Johnson's formula was "claret for boys, port for men, and brandy for heroes." Colonel Jacques begged some beer to drink with his bread, and reports that the "good woman gave me very freely." Locke held in *Thoughts* that the child's "*Drink* should be only Small Beer."<sup>1</sup>

Although Cowper mercilessly flays the evils of public school education, he is not primarily concerned with the curriculum. Far from objecting to the classics, he is favorably disposed toward them. While not going to the length of Shaftesbury, who fervently hoped that the time would not be long ere he might change the unprofitable study of "these moderns of ours" for a hearty application to the ancients, or like Denham who swallowed his Greek with the same eagerness as he did water when thirsty, Cowper nevertheless recalls with pleasure how he cultivated

<sup>1</sup> Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Section 16, *Drink*.



a school taste for ancient poetry, "catching its ardor as I mused along." Neither does he join hands with those who plead for a study of the mother tongue. Although announcing himself as "no friend of Lily's Grammar," he considers it one of his principal advantages as a composer of verses that he has not read an English poet "these thirteen years, and but one these twenty years." His classroom experiences must have been pleasant, for he reveals a fondness for school terminology, weaving into his lines in *Conversation* such phrases as "prompts him" and "prescribes his theme." His genuine scorn is aroused by the "chattering train" of Fashion, who is aped in the schools. Cowper warms up to his theme while considering the spendthrift boy whose school expense "pinches parents blue" and "mortifies the liberal hand of love." He is keen on the trail of moral offenses, which he finds "where most offensive, in the skirts Of the robed pedagogue."<sup>1</sup>

Cowper's *Tirocinium* (1785) condemns schools chiefly on the ground that the separation of the boy from parental ties destroys not only his confidence in his father but also his ability to join naturally thereafter in the life of the home circle. This painful rupture is the beginning of all evils, and occurs at an early age when the boy is left to the mercies of a crowded school that can not properly guard his morals or guide him in the right path. While the parent is absorbed in the careful breeding of colts and puppies, his son is scampering at one of "these menageries" which "all fail their trust." Thinking of his own experience at school, Cowper concludes that "great schools suit best the sturdy and the rough." One large class of boys who are torn from home and who are "at best but pretty buds unblown" miss the affection of father and mother, and are

<sup>1</sup> *The Task*, Book II.

given "by public hackneys in the schooling trade" no better nourishment for the growing mind than "conjugated verbs, and nouns declined." Sound religion such as the child had learned at home at his mother's knees is sparingly taught while he is crammed with "much mythologic stuff." At this point the poet escapes to a footnote to guard against misunderstanding. He does "not mean to censure the pains that are taken to instruct a schoolboy in the religion of the heathen, but merely that neglect of Christian culture which leaves him shamefully ignorant of his own." This is in harmony with Cowper's specific theme.

That we are bound to cast the minds of youth  
Betimes into the mould of heavenly truth,  
That taught of God they may indeed be wise,  
Nor ignorantly wandering miss the skies (105—108).

Guided by this thought, Cowper views with pleasure the home training of the infant and child. He is carried back to the "season of life's happy spring" by the thought of that ingenious dreamer in whose "well-told" story "sweet fiction and sweet truth prevail." Bunyan's name is not mentioned, however, "lest so despised a name should move a sneer." Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* would naturally be a favorite with Cowper because it "guides the Progress of the soul to God." Until sent to the public school, the child was not ashamed to read such books or to begin and close the day with prayer. If the parent wishes to train his boy to lose these habits, which are a "bond upon his heart," he should allow him to learn "loose expense and fashionable waste" with a mob of boys at a public school where he will remain childish in "mischief only and in noise" because taverns and the bad example of older boys will there teach the knowledge which school pedantry does not. The glory of former ages when schools bred poets, statesmen, and divines has fled:

Our striplings shine indeed, but with such rays  
As set the midnight riot in a blaze.

The evil is heightened by the careless father who regales his sons with stories of his schoolboy adventures, in place of emphasizing the pleasing spectacle of those experiences which would make him live over again his "innocent sweet simple years" through recollection of "The little ones, unbuttoned, glowing hot" in their games at school, where he "started into life's long race."

Children whose expectation of riches or titles makes solid worth an encumbrance may indeed learn at school a certain pleasing address or personal carriage, and the scorn of all delights but those of sense. But the plebeian, whose chief distinction should be a spotless name, must shine because of "true desert or not at all." What are parents thinking of, then, if they "risk their hopes, their dearest treasure, there?" It is immoral to risk all in order that the child may make a titled friend by intercourse with young peers at a great public school. It is "barbarous prostitution of your son" to proceed on the assumption that "The parson knows enough who knows a Duke." The poet scorns such boyish friendship, which can make "A piece of mere church-furniture at best." The "public hives of puerile resort" that are of most approved standing, owe their repute in part at least to such sordid considerations. The hope of connections formed for interest swells the great schools beyond a size that can be well managed. And yet Cowper does not wish to indicate that small schools are therefore to be preferred. He will praise a school as Pope has praised a government: that one is best which is most faithfully administered.

Few boys are born with talents that excel,  
But all are capable of living well;  
Then ask not, whether limited or large?  
But, watch they strictly, or neglect their charge?



If masters are anxious only that the boy may con his lessons while they neglect his morals as a "despised concern," the great schools and small deserve a common blame.

To the father who is blessed with an ingenuous son, Cowper offers as substitute for a master, that the parent be

Father, and friend, and tutor, all in one.

Why resign into a stranger's hand the task which he is himself capable of performing?

How!—turn again to tales long since forgot,  
Aesop, and Phaedrus, and the rest?—Why not?

He will not blush, that has a father's heart,

To take in childish plays a childish part,

But bends his sturdy back to any toy

That youth takes pleasure in, to please his boy. (545—550)

What can compensate the father for such pleasures to be enjoyed in "domestic snug recess?" Certainly not a son whose heart has been alienated by absence and by accomplishments or vices learned at school.

If the father's professional demands absorb all his time and energy, he may find it expedient to engage a reliable tutor, who can be his son's best friend in domestic surroundings. A capable tutor, provided his talents are respected in the household, will increase a parent's delight in his son because discipline will be backed by the love which the son would miss at school. His mind will be developed, but at the same time the parent may joy to see "his morals undefiled."

Cowper is so sensitive to sensual abuses that he offers still another alternative. If the parent is a worldly man whose table is "indeed unclean" with "discourse obscene," and if he has a "polite, card-playing" wife who is chained to routs, so that every day the child sees in the home what is fatal to his future,

Find him a better in a distant spot,  
 Within some pious pastor's humble cot,  
 Where vile example (yours I chiefly mean,  
 The most seducing, and the oftenest seen)  
 May never more be stamped upon his breast,  
 Nor yet perhaps incurably impressed. (759—764)

There he will grow strong in body and soul under a kindly and natural regimen of regular hours and simple diet. Instead of idle dreaming of past and future follies,

His virtuous toil may terminate at last  
 In settled habit and decided taste.

By presenting these ways out of the dilemma, Cowper decides the debate over the comparative value of school and home education.

Cowper's lines are addressed to the prosperous middle class of Englishmen ("tenants of life's middle state") whose undebauched character retains two thirds of all English virtue. He calls upon them to look about on an age "perversely blind" in the matter of education, and to decide wisely in the education of their sons. The school-bred boy may be virtuous still, but if so he is the exception, because in the eyes of the poet, prevailing manners of loose taste and extravagance take their color from the schools. Therefore,

though I would not advertise them yet,  
 Nor write on each—"This building to be let,"  
 Unless the world were all prepared to embrace  
 A plan well worthy to supply their place;  
 Yet, backward as they are, and long have been,  
 To cultivate and keep the MORALS clean  
 (Forgive the crime), I wish them, I confess,  
 Or better managed, or encouraged less. (915—922)

Poetic attacks like those of Pope, West, and Cowper put schoolmasters on the defensive. This is clear from a

prose treatise like Barrow's *Essay on Education* (1802), which contains a chapter on the comparative advantages of school and home education. Although novelists and essayists of the century confirm the evidence of poets on the education of children, masters of schools tried to meet objections raised on the grounds of improper supervision and poor instruction due to large numbers. Barrow suggests that the evils of domestic education can be tolerated only in favor of those who are incapacitated physically or mentally. It is obvious, however, that he is holding a brief in relation to which he is not a disinterested party. The evidence of poets against endowed schools is supported down through the century.

Poems based on material drawn from village schools were written in a different literary tradition. The tendency toward sentimental and idyllic treatment is strong in all poets who noticed the elementary or village schools. Such humorous treatments of the earliest stages of education as those of Prior and Tickell, which are less common than the idyllic treatment as exemplified by Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* (1742) and Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770), are prompted by good nature, and not by the biting satire that inspired the lines of Churchill and Lloyd on the endowed schools. Distance lent enchantment to the poet's representation of the first stages of his education. Even where the problem of poverty in relation to schooling has been noticed, as in Dyer's *The Fleece*, we may note the same tendency to overlook harsher facts. That the problem of providing common education for the masses was acute is instanced by the fact that Brougham's Committee in 1818 reported three thousand five hundred parishes, in a total



of ten thousand, without schools of any kind. Practical efforts to establish primary education had been made from the last decade of the seventeenth century by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. In the eighties of the eighteenth century the Sunday School movement, headed by Raikes, had faced the problem; and the efforts of Hannah More to establish schools at Cheddar, have already been noticed. The fact, however, is that the elementary school did not receive either the amount or the kind of practical treatment accorded to the endowed schools.

Although poets were on the whole fully abreast of the most advanced contemporary educational ideals with regard to endowed schools and the houses of industry, they were inclined to become conventional or sentimental the moment they took up the first period of a child's education. Mention of the hornbook, for instance, is common from Prior to Wordsworth. Although the hornbook must have been displaced in part at least by the spelling-book before the reign of George II, references and allusions persist to the end of the century.<sup>1</sup> Cowper was five years old at the close of the reign, yet he notes as late as 1785 that parents put a hornbook into the child's hand. They do this to please the child at a tender age:

'Tis called a book, though but a single page.<sup>2</sup>

Added to the unique form and shape is the quaint poetic flavor of the criss-crow row that is associated with the hornbook.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Cowpers *Conversation*, alphabets of ivory hold the attention of the unlettered boy, who is

Sorting and puzzling with a deal of glee,  
Those seeds of science called his A B C.

<sup>2</sup> *Tirocinium*.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the poem *The Characters of the Christ-Cross Row*, attributed to Thomas Gray, Aldine edition.

Coming down to the eighteenth century from medieval days, the hornbook has rightfully been called the well-spring of English education and literature :

All human arts and every science meet  
Within the limits of thy single sheet.

Few specimens have survived the destruction which has befallen children's books. A penny hornbook at a sale in London in 1893 brought the sum of sixty-five pounds.

In Prior's *Alma*, the English maid gives Master John a gingerbread hornbook.

And, that the child may learn the better,  
As he can name, he eats the letter.  
Proceeding thus with vast delight,  
He spells, and gnaws, from left to right. (Canto II)

Tickell gives a humorous account in his *Horn-Book* :

Thee will I sing, in comely wainscot bound,  
And golden verge enclosing thee around;  
The faithful horn before, from age to age,  
Preserving thy invaluable page;  
Behind, thy patron saint in armour shines,  
With sword and lance, to guard thy sacred lines:  
Beneath his courser's feet the dragon lies  
Transfixed; his blood thy scarlet cover dyes;  
Th' instructive handle's at the bottom fixed,  
Lest wrangling critics should pervert the text.

\*

No greasy thumbs thy spotless leaf can soil,  
Nor crooked dogs-ears thy smooth corners spoil.

\*

Scarce lives the man to whom thou'rt quite unknown,  
Though few th' extent of thy vast empire own.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cawthorn's *Wit and Learning* (1757) :

Here, puppy! with this penny get  
A hornbook or an alphabet;  
And see if that licentious eye  
Can tell a great A from an I?

Poets often refer satirically to the ignorance or illiteracy of the masses, without, however, inquiring into probable causes or remedies. By using the hornbook as his point of departure, Tickell is exceptional in bringing his discussion of illiteracy close to the affairs of children. In mock heroic vein he gives a picture of the fond grandsire who was consoled and comforted on his deathbed by hearing his grandson Hodge pronounce gravely the great A, B, C of the hornbook. The poet also notices the general state of inability to read. Fame reports that there are whole parishes, especially in Essex Hundreds, in which the hornbook is unknown. It has since been estimated that, in a total of five and one half million inhabitants in 1700, only thirty thousand children were receiving schooling, whereas according to our standards there should have been nine hundred thousand.<sup>1</sup>

Although poets are content to refer to the hornbook, we know that awakened interest in the study of the mother tongue resulted in the publication of spelling-books and grammars. In Mandeville's *Essay on Charity Schools* we find in addition to references to the criss-cross row (Christ-Cross Row), allusions to heaps of spelling-books and primers; and publishers' announcements contain such titles as *The Child's First Book*. In Defoe's *Complete English Gentleman* we find speculations on the advantage of spelling the "beautifullest and best improved language in the world." As early as 1699 the board of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge gave a hearing to Mr. Symons, a schoolmaster of Cripplegate, who had announced the discovery of the secret of teaching twenty to thirty boys the alphabet in a day's time.

<sup>1</sup> Consult D. Salmon's *The Education of the Poor in the Eighteenth Century*.



In actual business practice we find that during the first quarter of the century masters were frequently bound to teach apprentices to write. Stipulations to this effect are frequent in Sheffield about 1715. The Manuscript Indentures at Corsham contain a memorandum concerning Peter Bush, who was bound on May 20, 1706: "it was agreed before sealing hereof by all parties therein concerned that the said William Goodwyn shall teach his said apprentice to write well before he is forth of his time."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the wide interest in grammar, children could not have benefited much, because poor spelling was common among all classes in town and country. Although Wilkie takes offense at his "degenerate age of lead" for its belief that Shakespeare could not read, his biographer says that "deeply learned as he was, Wilkie could neither read nor spell correctly." Chatterton in *Kew Gardens* observes that it is doubtful if Bristol aldermen can read; while Lloyd states that not one in twenty will succeed, for "Consider, sir, how few can read." It is to be expected that Cowper's "rural carvers" would try to immortalize themselves in "characters uncouth and spelt amiss"; but we are hardly prepared for the evidence of illiteracy among men and women of station in life. In *Clarissa Harlowe* there is this appeal: "Dear, dear sir! if I am to be compelled! let it be in favor of a man that can read and write." And later, in connection with a wretchedly spelled letter from Solmes, Clarissa says: "he can read and write as well as most gentlemen, I can tell you that"; while in *Pamela* there is comment on the nobility to the effect that Lord Davers's nephew "spells most lamentably." The same situation appears with even greater emphasis with regard to women. In *Clarissa Harlowe* there is the comment: "So, the honest girl is ac-

<sup>1</sup> See O. J. Dunlop's *English Apprenticeship and Child Labor*.

cepted—of good parentage—but, through a neglected education, plaguy illiterate: she can neither write, nor read writing.” Defoe’s observations on female education are that girls are taught to read, “and perhaps to write their names or so, and that is the height of a woman’s education.” Gay passes off a bad speller with the comment “like a court lady though he write and spell.”

The education of girls was of course in general not as careful as that of Swift’s Stella. In the elementary schools, girls were taught chiefly to sew and knit, so as to fit them for service, this being the attitude even in the time of Hannah More’s Cheddar Schools at the close of the century. It is therefore not merely witty of Chesterfield to admonish his son that “Inaccuracies in orthography, or in style, are never pardoned but in ladies.” Walpole recalls how the younger Duchess of Marlborough “exposed herself by placing a monument and silly epitaph, of her own composition and bad spelling, to Congreve, in Westminster Abbey.” It would seem from all evidence that the primitive and certainly inadequate hornbook could not have been an effective medium for teaching more than the alphabet, and that the shoals of mothers’ assistants did not perform their mission adequately.

The same impulse that stirred poets to recall lovingly their early acquaintance with the hornbook, led them also to remember with affection the village schoolmistress. Rural surroundings and her own simple ways fitted in easily with an idyllic conception of early childhood as a happy, carefree time. Sympathetic pictures of the dame’s school occur as late as Henry Kirke White’s *Childhood*, which notices how the “village matron kept her little school”; and Crabbe is stirred to write lines that breathe sympathy and love in *The Parish Register* (1807):

The pious mistress of the school sustains  
Her parents' part, nor their affection feigns,  
But pitying feels; with due respect and joy,  
I trace the matron at her loved employ. (Part I)

The poet of realism might here have written with characteristic bareness of detail, for later governmental investigation and debates in Parliament are not colored by sentiment. We hear of gray-haired dames whose chief recommendation is their poverty. A member quoted a dame as saying: "It's little they pays, and it's little we teaches them." Macaulay, while speaking in the Commons in 1847, refers to teachers of both sexes in elementary schools as the "refuse of the callings," and contends that they do "not know whether the earth is a cube or a sphere." Yet whatever their shortcomings, village schools were the subject of sentimental treatment from Shenstone to Crabbe.

The schoolmistress fared better than the schoolmaster. Burns, who was quick to sense sham and pretension in the dignitaries of his acquaintance, has left a not too pleasing record of schoolmasters. As a result of Burns's satire in *Death and Dr. Hornbook* (1785), John Wilson, parish schoolmaster at Tarbolton, was compelled to relinquish his teaching. The bad conditions from which elementary education suffered, become clear from a perusal of this "true story." Wilson at the same time conducted the parish school and a small grocery shop, where in addition to commodities he sold drugs and gave medical advice. In the words of Burns: "This gentleman, Dr. Hornbook, is professionally a brother of the sovereign order of the ferula; but, by intuition and inspiration, is at once an apothecary, surgeon, and physician."

Much of the characteristic wit of Burns went into the composition of the not wholly complimentary *Epitaph for*



*Mr. William Michie*, schoolmaster of Cleish Parish, Fifeshire:

Here lie Willie Michie's bones;  
O Satan, when ye tak him,  
Gie him the schulin o' your weans,  
For clever deils he'll mak them!

Byrom's *Epitaph* (written in chalk on the grave-stone of a profligate schoolmaster) also credits its subject with more skill than ability.

Here lies John Hill,  
A man of skill,  
His age was five times ten:  
He ne'er did good,  
Nor ever wou'd,  
Had he lived as long again.

It is not necessary for the purpose of this study to examine details that constitute the differences between the earlier and later versions of Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*. In the mood of Tickell, when that poet deigned to notice the humble hornbook, and in the spirit of Gay's *Trivia*, Shenstone in 1737 published *The Schoolmistress* in a volume of *Poems* for friends. Although *The Schoolmistress* was intended to produce a humorous effect, the reading public took it seriously, as in the instance of Gay's *Shepherd's Week*, and enjoyed its imagery. As it is generally known, Shenstone's poem was published in the revised form of 1742. Although the dame is the central figure, Shenstone is writing from the point of view of the children.

The sentiment with which he strove to suffuse his lines does not lead him to ignore wholly the shortcomings of the village school. In a pensive mood he observed the unworldliness and simplicity of schoolmistress and scholars; but his train of sentiments is based on direct observation. He "fairly drew his picture from the spot." In the spirit of his age he feared that this attention to lowly life would be "im-

puted to an entire ignorance." But it was this "fondness for his native country" and the fact that he did not "counterfeit the scene" which drew the praise of Wordsworth, who would back the schoolmistress in her garden or in her chair before the cottage door. Shenstone, in fact, has sketched sufficient details to make possible a reconstruction of many of the features of a rural elementary school. If the advertisement calls attention to the sentimental strain of the poem, ("a peculiar tenderness of sentiment") the quotation from Virgil emphasizes its realistic details:

And mingled sounds and infant plaints we hear,  
That pierce the entrance shrill, and wound the tender ear.

The opening stanzas reflect Shenstone's endeavor to combine idyllic elements with details of direct observation. Shenstone's heart is forlorn "full sorely" to think how modest worth lies neglected in the dull shades of obscurity. Then follows the setting, which is not wholly idyllic:

In every village marked with little spire,  
Embowered in trees, and hardly known to Fame,  
There dwells in lowly shed, and mean attire,  
A matron old, whom we Schoolmistress name;  
Who boasts unruly brats with birch to tame;  
They griev'd sore, in piteous durance pent,  
Awed by the power of this relentless dame;  
And oft-times, on vagaries idly bent,

For unkempt hair, or task unconn'd, are sorely shent.

The birch tree under whose wide-waving branches the school is sheltered, boded ill to pupils, whose "pulse beat low" when the wind rustled in its leaves. Another stanza elaborates a guarded protest against flogging, under the image of a scarecrow that frightens innocent birds. The sentiment which redounded to the protection of animals, and a feeling for their hardships, led Shenstone to notice also the hardships of childhood.

The dame's scrupulous cleanliness is reflected in her simple attire. Her cap was whiter than the driven snow, and her apron showed as delicate a blue as the harebell. She wore a russet kirtle of her own weaving. Her pupils were ranged about her in "gaping wonderment" and "pious awe." She could not be accused of a love for pompous titles, but "held right dear" the names bestowed upon her: "Goody, good-woman, gossip, n'aunt, or dame." Like many a parson and schoolmaster of the eighteenth century, she was something of an apothecary or herbalist, for she disdained mere painted flowers, and cultivated in her garden only "herbs for use and physic"; the "pungent radish, biting infant's tongue" found its place with "marjoram sweet" and lavender for "kerchief clean." On a Sunday evening she sat before her door, singing Sternhold's hymns, or in her summer seat in the garden retailed Bible stories. She admonished children when they were present, and held her sway over them when they were out of her sight, for she was warned of all their doings:

if little bird their pranks behold,  
'Twill whisper in her ear, and all the scene unfold.

These idyllic passages are interwoven with lines of a more sombre and forbidding cast. Like White's dame at the end of the century, Shenstone's schoolmistress is more formidable in the schoolroom than without; and the poet does not hesitate to portray her in the panoply of her office. Her elbow-chair is like the chair "of Scottish stem" in which the sovereign is crowned.

And in her hand, for sceptre, she does wield  
Tway birchen sprays; with anxious fear entwined,  
With dark distrust, and sad repentance filled;  
And stedfast hate, and sharp affliction joined,  
And fury uncontroled, and chastisement unkind.



Without her vested power to mete out punishment to "rebellious breasts" by applying the "baleful sprig," there would be no "comely peace of mind, and decent order" in English cottages. Clothed with such power

sits the dame, disguised in look profound,  
And eyes her fairy throng, and turns her wheel around.

After a stately command from her, the urchins take their books in hand. One luckless wight is found contemplating the picture of St. George and the Dragon instead of the criss-cross row. The dame looses his brogues, and "levels well her aim." Discipline evidently depended not on love and leading, but on fear, for the dame must flog "Till fear has taught them a performance meet." Shenstone's analysis of the child mind in this flogging scene shows that he was writing with his eye on the object. There is an especially convincing bit of psychological analysis in the stanzas that trace the fluctuations of emotion in the sister of the boy who is being flogged. Outside of Blake's poetry, this is the most extended passage that attempts the portrayal of childish emotion. The continued obstinacy of the boy after he has been sent to the corner, where he stands with one fist in his mouth and the other in his hair, and his stolid refusal to be moved by the dame's cajolery and her offering of cakes, are well done. But the passage is no more vivid than the analysis of the little sister's reaction to her brother's peril and disgrace.

All playful as she sate, she grows demure;  
She finds full soon her wonted spirits flee;  
She meditates a prayer to set him free:  
Nor gentle pardon could this dame deny  
(If gentle pardon could with dames agree)  
To her sad grief that swells in either eye,  
And wrings her so that all for pity she could dye.

No longer can she now her shrieks command;  
 And hardly she forbears, through awful fear,  
 To rushen forth, and with presumptuous hand,  
 To stay harsh Justice in its mid career.  
 (Ah! too remote to ward the shameful blow!)  
 She sees no kind domestic visage near,  
 And soon a flood of tears begins to flow;  
 And gives a loose at last to unavailing woe.

When Shenstone moralizes this bit of photographic realism, there is a suggestion of romantic protest against repression and the dead leveling of pupils which was so obnoxious to his schoolmate Jago at Solihul. We are told that the dame knew how to thwart the proud and raise the submissive child: but the poet sounds a warning, nevertheless, against the indiscriminate policy of repression common in all schools. The regimen of fear is easily abused by authority in power over the little ones. Therefore

Beware, ye dames, with nice discernment see,  
 Ye quench not too the sparks of nobler fires:  
 Ah! better far than all the Muses' lyres,  
 All coward arts, is Valour's generous heart;  
 The firm fixt breast which fit and right requires,  
 Like Vernon's patriot soul! more justly great  
 Than Craft that pimps for ill, or flowery false Deceit.

He sees a little bench of bishops, a chancellor in embryo,  
 or a poet who,

Though now he crawl along the ground so low,  
 Nor weeting how the Muse should soar so high,  
 Wisheth, poor starveling elf! his paper kite may fly.

Children should be "nursed with skill" while at school; for "dazzling fruits appear" only when dames teach "with sagacious foresight."

The poem closes in a pensive strain, after an idyllic passage on the fruits and Shrewsbury cates that tempt children freed from school to part with their pennies.

Ah! midst the rest, may flowers adorn his grave,  
 Whose art did first these dulcet cates display!  
 A motive fair to Learning's imps he gave,  
 Who cheerless o'er the darkling region stray;  
 Till Reason's morn arise, and light them on their way.

Shenstone is preoccupied with children whose ages range from three to six years. His schoolmistress must have combined with her school duties some of the functions of a day-nurse. Across the open doorway of the school is an "imprisoning-board"

Lest weakly wights of smaller size should stray;  
 Eager, perdie, to bask in sunny day!

The dame's "ancient hen,"

Which, ever and anon, impelled by need,  
 Into her school, begirt with chickens, came,

further emphasizes the lack of organization and school atmosphere according to our standards of elementary school procedure. In fact, in spite of the poet's conscious effort to suffuse the whole with tenderness and sentiment, much of which was no doubt true to his recollections of Sarah Lloyd and her school at Halesowen, he adhered closely to the spirit of the motto. Whatever the idyllic charm of the setting and the picturesque dame in her garden or at her cottage door, she is not, in the light of modern ideals, attractive in her schoolroom. It is not a schoolroom full of happy, interested, responsive youngsters whose activities are lovingly, if scientifically, evoked by a sympathetic teacher who has been trained to an understanding of the child mind.

The fleeting glimpses which Godsmith vouchsafes of the village school at Sweet Auburn (in *The Deserted Village*, 1770) are seen through a haze of sentiment that does not wholly obscure harsh facts. The school was as bare and ill regulated as that of Shenstone's schoolmistress.



Though the master was "skilled to rule," the poet does not obscure the fact that the little school was a "noisy mansion." The rule of fear by flogging lay at the heart of his pedagogy. Goldsmith's interest is chiefly in the schoolmaster, who is seen through the eyes of his pupils, and then as reflected in the admiration of the gazing rustics. They wonder how one small head could carry all he knew. But with the clownish admiration is bound up the unwholesome fear of his pupils, for he was "a man severe" and "stern to view." The "boding tremblers" had learned to foretell the day's disasters in his "morning face," and were not above laughing at his many jokes with "counterfeited glee." They were sensitive to the "dismal tidings" implied in his frowns.<sup>1</sup> Goldsmith, who reveals no interest in the problems of the village school, but rather emphasizes the picturesque figure of the schoolmaster who heightens the effect of the idyllic background of happy village simplicity, nevertheless bears witness to the fact that the schoolmaster was, if anything, harsher and more intolerant than the schoolmistress.

About the age of fourteen, White composed his poem *Childhood*, which is colored by the melancholy that was characteristic of his temperament and led to his belief that childhood also drinks of "the bitter cup of care." The school in which he first entered the "low vestibule" of "learning's fane" was a cottage over whose mouldering walls the mantling woodbine crept. There the "village matron kept her little school." She is like Shenstone's schoolmistress in her neat habits and industry, and is individualized by her use of spectacles.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Charles Lamb's *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*.

Faint with old age, and dim were grown her eyes,  
A pair of spectacles their want supplies;  
These does she guard secure, in leathern case.  
From thoughtless wights, in some unweeted place.

She was gentle of heart, but like Goldsmith's schoolmaster knew how to rule. When the poet was "harshly" reproved before he had become inured to alphabetic toils, he crept back to his corner broken-hearted, and wept while thoughts of "tender home" passed through his mind. But out of school hours, he and his schoolmates gathered about the dame's wheel at the door of her cottage to wonder "how 'twas her spinning manufactured cloth." Children did not fear her at such times, "for out of school she never knew to chide."

Crabbe admired Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, and in *The Parish Register* has genuinely graced the humble theme by throwing a halo of sanctity and self-sacrifice about the "pious mistress." In what he calls a digression from the story of Dawkins and his orphaned children, he draws a sympathetic picture of the matron who assumed the care of the youngest orphan. He chooses the moment at the close of a summer day when she has dismissed her charges, and "frugal of light" sits knitting before her cottage door, and "of time as frugal" reads her Bible while she knits. "In pure respect" the village lads "walk silent on the grass" when they observe her as she closes the day with prayer.

Crabbe had but scant respect for the poor discarded Clelia who finally attempted to eke out a living as matron. The terse comment with which he dismisses her, that "nature gave not talents fit for rule," again serves to emphasize the fact that the inculcation of fear was the chief object of the discipline of a village schoolmistress (*The Borough, Letter XV*).

Crabbe's heartfelt lines on the "letter-loving dame" who had taught him his letters, but who was in the closing years of her life dependent on the charity of her former charges, shows that the teacher in a dame's school was often held in high respect. She had inoculated her pupils with the conviction that "learning is better worth than house or land." Half the wealthy and weighty men who rule the borough "own the matron as the leading cause" of their success in life. Because they feel the "pleasing debt," she is not compelled to close her useful life in a crowded institution of charity, by implication the fate of many dames; but

To her own house is borne the week's supply;  
There she in credit lives, there hopes in peace to die.

The poet's further personal tribute lovingly recalls in detail the pains she took with him in the first steps of learning.

Can I mine ancient Widow pass unmoved?  
Shall I not think what pains the matron took,  
When first I trembled o'er the gilded book?  
How she, all patient, both at eve and morn,  
Her needle pointed at the guardian horn;  
And how she soothed me, when, with study sad,  
I laboured on to reach the final zad?

*(The Borough, Letter XVII)*

Such tributes are exceptional in our period. When we recall the lines of Pope on the masters of the great endowed schools, and West's arraignment not only of their methods, but also of their personal habits, together with the strictures of Langhorne, Lloyd, and Jago, it is refreshing to come upon Lovibond's tribute to his classical master. Lovibond eulogizes him in at least three poems. Johnson says that "the initiatory part of his education Edward Lovibond received from the Rev. Mr. Woodeson, of Kingston, upon Thames, for whom he ever retained an almost filial affection: a cir-



cumstance which is equally honorable to the pupil and the preceptor." Lovibond's *Verses (written after passing through Findon, Sussex, 1768)* are addressed to his master, who was born at Findon. Lovibond's genuine respect for his teacher becomes clear in this graceful tribute. In the perennial eighteenth-century discussion of the comparative merits of domestic and school education, such a personal tribute gives concrete evidence of the success of private tuition.

His master "was one of those amiable beings whom none could know without loving. To the abilities of an excellent scholar was united a mind so candid, so patient, so replete with universal benevolence, that it glowed in every action. His life was an honor to himself, to religion, to human nature. He preserved to his death such simplicity of manners as is rarely to be met with. He judged of the world by the standard of his own virtuous heart; and few men who had seen such length of days ever left it so little acquainted with it." The unworldly qualities of his master stand out against the unpleasant characteristics emphasized in the poetry of the period:

Thou wert not born to plough the neighbouring main,  
 Or plant thy greatness near Ambition's throne;  
 Or count unnumbered fleeces on thy plain:  
 —The Muses loved and nursed thee for their own!  
 And twined thy temples here with wreaths of worth,  
 And fenced thy childhood from the blights of morn,  
 And taught enchanting song, and sent thee forth  
 To stretch the blessing to an age unborn.

In the poem he wrote upon the occasion of his former master's house being converted into a poor-house, Lovibond recalls the "gracious children, and the faithful wife" who welcomed him at their "social board." There in "Simplicity's abode"

the good teacher held by turns to youth  
 The blaze of fiction and pure light of truth,  
 Who, less by precept than example fired,  
 Glowed as he taught, inspiring and inspired.

Lovibond writes of nature polished by "classic art"; yet the virtue of the place lies in its having been in his day "Simplicity's abode,"

Where smiling Innocence looked up to God;  
 Where Nature's genuine graces charmed the heart.

The influence of Rousseau is clear also in the *Dedication of Julia's Letter*:

O thou who sitst in academic schools,  
 Less teaching than inspiring ancient art,  
 Thy own example nobler than their rules,  
 Thy blameless life best lesson for the heart.<sup>1</sup>

In 1798 Lancaster's Borough Road School advertised advanced doctrine with which many elementary schools in Great Britain have not caught up even today.<sup>2</sup> In that school, honorary orders of merit were worn until they were forfeited by misbehaviour, the "forfeiture being in lieu of

<sup>1</sup> Compare William Whitehead's *To the Rev. Dr. Louth*:  
 So let me still with filial love pursue  
 The muse and parent of my infant thought,  
 From whence the color of my life I drew,  
 When Bigg presided, and when Burton taught.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Dr. Johnson's remarks on Mr. Hunter, his headmaster: "He used . . . to beat us unmercifully; and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence; for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it." But he also said of him: "My master whipt me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing." Concerning Dr. Rose's lenient methods, Johnson remarked: "There is now less flogging in our great schools than formerly, but then less is learned there; so that what the boys get at one end they lose at the other." (Boswell's *Johnson*).

corporal punishment." Less than five years after this announcement, Barrow was irritated by observing that some schools preferred not to flog. He contends that the acquisition of learning must always be laborious and that only the authority of the teacher can confine his pupil to irksome and continued application. By authority he means flogging: "Yet perhaps without the use or the fear of it not a single scholar was ever made." With such doctrine deliberately promulgated even during the liberalizing age of romanticism, it is small wonder that Fielding, who had a tender feeling for Eton, should associate his schooldays there with the birch rod: "To thee at thy birchen altar with true Spartan devotion have I sacrificed."<sup>1</sup> Cowper characterizes school life as the "whip-gig state" in *Hope*, and in *The Valediction* alludes to Colman,

Thy schoolfellow and partner of thy plays  
(Where) Nichol swung the birch and twined the bays.

In *The Progress of Error* he is more explicit:

Plants raised with tenderness are seldom strong,  
Man's coltish disposition asks the thong,  
And without discipline the favourite child,  
Like a neglected forester, runs wild.

The poets, however, do not as a rule treat the custom of flogging with the lightheartedness of the great novelist. Chatterton's indignant infant muse would give advice to men when it calls the education of his day the "offspring illegitimate of Pain," an accusation hardly stronger than West's condemnation of persecuting "free-created souls with penal terror's awe."

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Tom Jones*: for Partridge, the barber and schoolmaster; and also for Thwackum. Note also Smollett's diverting paragraphs on flogging in *Peregrine Pickle*, and his delineation of schoolmasters and tutors in *Keypstick*, *Jennings*, and *Jolter*.



The evidence of poets that educational methods are coercive rather than directive is corroborated by the statutes of endowed and other schools. The ordinances of Chigwell School (Essex) direct, "That for speaking English in the Latin School, the Scholar be corrected with the Ferula: and for swearing, with the Rod." The Regulations at Witton, near Northwich (Chester), stipulate: "3rd In inflicting personal chastisement, he shall use only the Cane, except in cases of gross misbehaviour, when the Trustees must be consulted as to any other punishment." The "P. W." note which explains the "dreadful wand" held by the spectre in the *Dunciad*, informs the reader it was "a cane usually borne by Schoolmasters, which drives poor souls about like the wand of Mercury." That the elementary schools were conducted according to the doctrine of fear finds an almost amusing illustration in the *Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*: "Both of the mistresses are enjoined to treat the children tenderly; and not to use the rod, except in cases of necessity. But, in order to reconcile their young minds to flogging, when necessary, several sayings of King Solomon are put in a conspicuous part of the schools, and read once a quarter, so as to attract their attention and shew them the advantage of their being whipt."

The reactionary Somerville does not frown upon such pedagogical methods, but takes it as a matter of course that Gamaliel "with ruling rod trains up his babes of grace." His observations are good natured and tolerant, although he realizes that genius can not be forced in the schools. It is very plain that an ape can not be made an alderman, even by the redoubtable master at Westminster.

But, by your leave, good doctor Freind,

\*

When maggots once are in the brain,  
Whole loads of birch are spent in vain.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Fortune-Hunter.*

The conservative Doctor Johnson unsuccessfully defended Hastie, schoolmaster of Campbelltown, by contending that "no scholar had gone from him either blind or lame, or with any of his limbs or powers injured or impaired." And Cowper wrote that a person who obstinately held to "mulish folly" and would not be reclaimed by softer methods, must be made ashamed. Poets in general, however, showed nothing but indignation or contempt for flogging. In *Carnworth School* (1769) Graeme speaks of rescuing "Defenceless childhood from the scourge of age." Jenyns may contend that sages must be "cudgelled into sense," but in *The Dean and the Squire* Mason can not understand the educational value of physical punishment when a

Pedantic schoolmaster like York,  
Thrashes the wretch with grammar's flail,  
To mend his head corrects his tail;  
And this with most despotic fury,  
Heedless of mercy, law, and jury.

In *The Fortune-Hunter*, Somerville observed the same facts in a more tolerant mood:

His bum was often brushed, you'll say;  
'Tis true; now twice, then thrice a day:  
So leeches at the breech are fed,  
To cure vertigos in the head.

Pope's satiric muse in the *Dunciad* did not overlook the possibilities of the situation for a poetic castigation of school methods:

The pale Boy-Senator yet tingling stands,  
And holds his breeches close with both his hands. (IV)

Cawthorn's lines in *Wit and Learning* (1757) suggest the direct and brutal attack of a master:

I'll lay thee, miscreant! on my knee,  
And paint such welks thy naked seat on,  
As never truant felt at Eton.

Clara Reeve, who is usually liberal in her opinions on education, says of a certain pedagogue that "he was indeed too apt to use the rod, which was the ensign of his authority, and made the boys rather fear than love him." Her sympathies are clearly with the pupil. She found Arthur, who had been severely flogged, kicking his book before him ("it was Lily's Grammar") while "his heart heaved, his color rose, and he burst into tears."<sup>1</sup>

Byrom was sufficiently enlightened to realize that fear of the rod would not induce a sincere love of learning:

Homer, Virgil, Horace! (if you ask)  
Why, yes, the rod would send me to my task;  
But all the consultation that came out  
Had its own end—to 'scape the whipping bout.<sup>2</sup>

Barrow observed in 1802 that many masters of private schools had published essays, presumably on pedagogical subjects, the sole aim of which was to advertise their schools. S. Johnson's *Education* (1771), a poem in two parts, illustrates how one master skilfully combined the traditional attitude toward the classics with the new spirit manifest in poets who noticed school affairs. S. Johnson's poem derives from Pope's *Dunciad* in its protest against flogging

<sup>1</sup> *Destination*, vol. 1, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistle to a Friend*.—In the *Spectator* (1711) Steele writes: "I am confident that no boy who will not be allured to letters without blows, will ever be brought to anything with them. A great or good mind must necessarily be the worse for such indignities." It was repugnant to Steele that boys should kneel to a blockhead because of a false Latin quantity. In later life he still dreamed of his master once a month and could not forget his bloody schoolboy hand. (Compare Pope's "Till birch shall blush with noble blood no more"; and "dropping with infant's blood.") Steele goes on to say that "if you can disarm them of their rods, you will certainly have your old age revered by all the young gentlemen of Great Britain who are now between seven and seventeen."



and repression, and at the same time serves to advertise the author as a progressive who is acquainted with Rousseau. The edition of 1771 artfully serves the purposes of poetry, pedagogy, and publicity.

S. Johnson conducted a school in Shrewsbury, where he gave his pupils instruction in "Language, History, Geography, and in the use of Globes . . . the French language, and Drawing in all its branches, on the most reasonable terms." His poem is very plainly an advertisement of his school; it closes with an unmistakable *ad captandum* to the ladies, who as fond mothers and aunts would exert no inconsiderable influence in the choice of a school. This point of view, however unfavorable to art, is valuable as indicating the pedagogical attitude which a capable master considered attractive to the clientele of his school.<sup>1</sup>

S. Johnson's classical attainments are displayed in footnotes by means of quotations from Sappho, Lucretius, Pliny, Cireco, Juvenal and others who are made to support his trite observations on life. To show that he is at the same time abreast of his generation, he quotes also from Rousseau's *Emile* (1762). Rousseau's works were translated as soon as published, and were widely known through reviews in the magazines. *Emile* commanded the attention of English readers everywhere, to arouse opposition, ridicule, or, at times, partial approval.<sup>2</sup> Rousseau's return to nature was readily assimilated because it was in harmony with contemporary English thought. Johnson shows unmistakably that in his mind the idea of giving child nature free play in education is connected with Rousseau. After condemning

<sup>1</sup> S. Johnson is, of course, not the great Samuel Johnson.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Observations on Mr. Rousseau's New System of Education with some remarks on the different translations of that celebrated work. In a letter to a friend . . .* London, Cadell, 1763. —See also Jacques Pons, op. cit., *passim*, for additional titles.

the attitude of parents who force a booby son into one of the learned professions, Johnson calls attention to the sinewy limbs and simple mind that "nature for other purposes designed." The word *nature* carries an asterisk that refers the reader to Rousseau's *Emile*: "Voulez-vous toujours être bien guidé? Suivez toujours les indications de la Nature." He develops his thought by indicating how many a strong-limbed man curses his meddling parents for having forced him to enter a profession in which he starves by his pen, when he was "gifted with nerves the manly axe to wield."

List then, oh list, ye fools, to Nature's voice.  
Thwart not her dictates, but indulge her choice.  
She plainly shews you where her bias leans,  
And, for the end she aims at, yields the means:  
Be not less rational than brutes, whose young  
Receive what culture doth to brutes belong.

The italicized phrase *had Nature been obeyed* occurs four times in twenty-five consecutive lines. He advises the teacher that nature should be the "cynosure by which he steers."

Yet Johnson, like all true Britishers since the fourteenth century, is suspicious of anything that comes out of France. He expresses a fine scorn for the "mamma" who fetched two tutors out of France, one to teach the child to mock English manners and to garnish his skull while leaving the mind undisturbed, and the second to teach the child to jabber French before he quits his go-cart—with the result that the child's brain has been neglected while his morals have been corrupted.<sup>1</sup> Johnson's anti-Gallic attitude is as obvious as that of Mrs. Trimmer and Mrs. Sherwood, although he does not take the anti-Rousseau attitude of Clara

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Cawthorn's *Equality of Human Conditions* ("spoken at the annual visitation of Tunbridge School, 1746"):

While airy Belville, guiltless of a school,  
Shines out a French edition of a fool.

Reeve (1799). In *Destination* she illustrates her point by relating a story that shows the fruits of an education such as that advocated by "John James Rousseau": "I relate this *true story* as an antidote to the poisonous doctrine lately inculcated, that children are neither to be contradicted nor corrected."

S. Johnson's poem is both an obvious and typical illustration of the severe limitations with which Rousseau's doctrines were received in England. When Johnson, near the close of his poem, favors guiding the child according to his natural gifts, "with tender hand to rear the infant state," he again supports his line with a quotation from *Emile*. But he loses himself immediately in the traditional pedagogy devised for the institutional child:

Support its weakness, ere it run to waste,  
To lop the rampant shoot, which strong and rude  
Warps it from all that's beautiful and good;  
To touch the mind with emulation's flame,  
With ridicule, or keener sense of shame.

His long quotations from the *Dunciad*, and the constant and vehement denunciation of flogging, indicate that the influences working on him were essentially native English. It was modern in 1771 to show an acquaintance with *Emile*, and the doctrine of following nature was beginning to be accepted. However limited the application of Rousseau's doctrines, they nevertheless had a liberating influence that accelerated the native tendency away from the narrow classical curriculum and all its abuses. The ideal Preceptor is one who knows

The manners of each circling age;  
To bend not break their Minds; their little rage  
And humors hit; their passions how to stir;  
When to exert the rein, when use the spur;  
For different Minds a different treatment ask.



Rousseau's ideal method of teaching by example and guidance is favorably noticed. This was the least radical of Rousseau's contentions. Yet even here Johnson can not break away from traditional methods; for where he condemns flogging in the first part (*The Pedant*), he considers it proper when used with discretion, and defends it with limitations in the second part (*The Preceptor*). In reality his objection is not to flogging, but rather to the manner of administering the beating indiscriminately for the most trivial offenses.

See innocence arraigned before his throne  
For some slight error of the brain alone.  
Half dead with shame, abashed, appalled he stands;  
Grief drowns his voice, while terror lifts his hands.  
Lo, on his knees the little suppliant falls,  
In piercing cries for mercy, mercy calls.  
Oh hear him, hear him, and for *once* receive,  
*Once* taste that heavenly pleasure to forgive.  
"No, let him smart" replies the unfeeling clod,  
"He spoils the child who spares the rod."  
Oh, maxim ill applied.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry Brooke, author of *The Fool of Quality* (1766), would under any but prevailing conditions not have introduced the tutor of the boys as Mr. Vindex, the symbol of whose office is "that tree whose bare name strikes terror through all our seminaries of learning." Brooke does not hesitate to draw the character of this vindictive example of eighteenth-century pedagogue in strong terms: "Mr Vindex began to assume a more expanded authority, and gave a free scope to the surly terrors of his station." And again: "The next day Mr. Vindex returned, doubly armed, with a monstrous birch-rod in one hand, and a ferule in the other." From the author's apostrophies on the wrongheadedness of this pedagogue, and from the details of the story, one may get a fairly accurate conception of "the three accustomed strokes."—Compare *Tom Jones* (Book III, Chapter VI): "Castigo te non quod odio habeam, sed quod Amem. I chastise thee not out of hatred, but out of love."—In *Roderick Random* the boys bind and beat their master in the schoolroom.

As is clear from poetry since the *Dunciad*, most pedagogues are wholly repressive in their methods. S. Johnson carries on the protest against the clan, and can find no word strong enough to express his contempt. The following words appear in rapid succession—"mercenary," "pedant," "leaden crown," "meanest of the flogging train," "the Thwackum of my age," "tigers and wolves have more humanity," "from their limbs their tender skin you tear," "barbarian," "caitiff," "scorpion."

But for the herd of pedagogues,—I know  
Not any such pernicious weeds that grow;  
Like other weeds too, they aspire to curb  
The kindly progress of each other herb.

Lancaster's attempt to abolish corporal punishment represents a master's liberal views after the influence of Rousseau had made itself felt in England. Schoolboys themselves finally rebelled, as in the instance of Wordsworth's friend Matthews, who had attended the Merchant Tailors' School where he had taken part in a revolt that led to the abolition of flogging in that institution. In general, however, the practice continued into the nineteenth century, and was defended by Doctor Arnold of Rugby. He still believed in the "natural inferior state of boyhood," and held that objections to flogging originate in "that proud notion of personal independence which is neither reasonable nor Christian, but essentially barbarian." Dickens, who was a true friend of children, and broke many a lance in their defense, was able after 1830 to find fourteen types of coercion for discussion in connection with his exposure of abuses in English schools.<sup>1</sup>

Early in the century Isaac Watts had recognized the value of gentleness and kindness in the guidance and edu-

<sup>1</sup> *Dickens as an Educator* by James L. Hughes.

cation of children. He was quick to recognize these qualities in a schoolmaster like his friend Thomas Rowe, to whom he addressed the poem *To the much-honoured Mr. Thomas Rowe, the Director of my Youthful Studies*. But whereas he praises Rowe for the qualities Lovibond saw in Woodeson, much of the emphasis is still, because of the age in which the poem was written, on the negative element of protest against the binding customs and magic chains of the schools. Berkeley, on the other hand, leaves Europe behind as hopelessly old and fixed in her ways. In *Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America*, written about 1726, and published in 1752, he looks to the new world, youthful and strong, to redress the educational grievances of the old world. He would make a new start that is impossible under prevailing conditions in Europe.

In happy climes, the seat of Innocence,  
Where nature guides and virtue rules,  
Where men shall not impose for truth and sense  
The pendency of courts and schools:

There shall be sung another golden age.  
The rise of empire and of arts,  
The good and great inspiring epic rage,  
The wisest heads and noblest hearts.  
Not such as Europe breeds in her decay;  
Such as she bred when fresh and young,  
When heavenly flame did animate her clay.

Although no practical reforms seem to have been made in the schools, poets had definitely cleared the way for Wordsworth's statement of a plan for national education of the masses. Wordsworth's denunciation of the state's neglect of its children is no stronger, however, than his strictures on the educational fads reflected in the many systems of home education which were devised to take the place of the



discredited established curriculum before the days of nationally supervised common schools. To understand his attitude toward the education of children, it is essential to note the comment of poets on books and reading matter for children.

## CHAPTER V

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Except for William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, literature intended for children is as dreary at the close as at the opening of the century. Various forces at work throughout the century, but with special vigor at the opening and close, had as their avowed object the making over of the child according to preconceived ideas and plans of a moral and religious nature. The *Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge* had as its province the inculcation of religious and moral precepts among children of the Establishment and, in many instances, of dissenting communities also. The restless activities in dissenting circles had as their chief object the salvaging of the souls of children from the grip of the Devil and all his forces. During the last quarter of the century, the results of awakened interest in scientific matters were painfully obvious in literature intended for children. These publications reveal clearly a tendency to secularize subject matter, but in method show a propagandist spirit that had as its objective the making over of the child into a young savant. In other words, the child at the close of the century was still nurtured on the institutional plan. Where Isaac Watts in the first quarter had been stimulated by religious ideals, Mrs. Barbauld, Aikin, Day, and the Edgeworths in the last quarter were in addition fired by enthusiasm for moral tales which incorporated natural science. Even Newberry, in the middle of the century, was not altruistic in combining the functions of a publisher of children's books with those of a dispenser of patent medicines; and his stories had also their reward

for virtue, and punishment for evil. Unfortunately, Blake's peculiar methods of publication restricted his audience to such an extent that his delightful lyrics for children could not seriously compete with less worthy publications.

While Prior was developing complimentary verse on childhood to its highest perfection in the classicist manner, and while Swift was composing stinging satires on the mechanical use of childhood, non-conformist writers were carrying on propaganda from which emerged in 1720 the *Divine Songs for Children* and *Moral Songs* of Isaac Watts. For a proper understanding of this epoch-making contribution to poetry on childhood, it is necessary to notice briefly the religious and social environment from which it sprang.

The characteristic mood of the non-conformists was one of gloom. The doctrine of election led them to practice introspection in order to discover conformity with the wishes of God. They feared the wrath of God because of their sinful nature. Original sin was more than a doctrine; it was a grim reality that stood between them and eternal salvation. Like Donne and his followers in the seventeenth century, they were preoccupied with death and the grave. In their essentially ascetic outlook, the life of the senses was an evil to be avoided if they wished to escape hell fire. They did not allow themselves even the natural love of children, "those tempting things." At the end of the first section of Watts's *Horae Lyricae* are certain poems "peculiarly dedicated to Divine Love." The first of the group has the title *The Hazard of Loving the Creatures*. Watts pursues the argument that whatever love is given to friends and relatives leaves so much less for God. Men must control natural instincts in the interests of salvation. This is especially necessary in relation to children.



Nature has soft and powerful bands,  
And Reason she controls;  
While children with their little hands  
Hang closest to our souls.

Thoughtless they act th' old Serpent's part;  
What tempting things they be!  
Lord, how they twine about our heart,  
And draw it off from thee!

Face to face with grim spiritual realities, it was essential that man should fight sin at the source. Salvation was conditioned upon the realization of one's sinful nature. In his thirty-ninth sermon, on the *Right Improvement of Life*, Watts warns his congregation that "this is the time that was given you for your reconciliation with God, and securing your everlasting interest. All the elect are born into this world sinful and miserable. . . . We are all, by nature . . . under sentence of condemnation." The child is born sinful; therefore it must be made to realize the precarious state in which it lives. It becomes the duty of parents to instruct their children. The growing soul of the parent, doubled in wedlock, and multiplied in children,

Stands but the broader mark for all the mischiefs  
That rove promiscuous o'er the mortal stage.

That parents might not become slack in this fundamental matter, clergymen exhorted them in sermons, and as practical helps wrote manuals for use with children. It is at this point that we meet Janeway in the seventeenth century and Watts in the eighteenth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See John Ashton's *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, vol. I, p. 184. Ashton quotes from the lost and found columns of a periodical: "Taken from a child, a gold chain with this motto, *Memento Mori*."

As the writer of this study holds in his hand a little yellow book, wrinkled and faded with age, there rises from its pages a spirit of earnestness and rigid duty—a gloomy sincerity of purpose. It was written by James Janeway, and is entitled *A Token for Children, being an exact account of the conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children* (1671-1672).

In this little manual for children, Janeway appeals to parents: "Take some time daily to speak a little to your children one by one about their miserable condition by nature. I know a child that was converted by this sentence from a godly schoolmistress in the country: 'Every mother's child of you are by nature children of wrath.' Put your children upon learning their catechism, and the Scriptures, and getting to pray and weep by themselves after Christ." Janeway is sufficiently specific and picturesque to command attention: "And dare you neglect so direct a command? Are the souls of your children of no value? Are you willing that they should be brands of hell? Are you indifferent whether they be damned or saved? Shall the devil run away with them without control? Will you not use your utmost endeavor to deliver them from the wrath to come?" And he proceeds more directly to children themselves by stating, "They are not too little to die. . . . They are not too little to go to hell." *Example One* contains these sentences: "Miss Sarah Howley—when she was between eight and nine years old, was carried by her friends to hear a sermon, where the minister preached upon Mat. 11, 31—My yoke is easy and my burden is light. In the applying of which Scripture, this child was highly awakened, and made deeply sensible of the condition of her soul." In the following sentence there is direct testimony to show what was expected of children at the age of eight: "O mother,

said she, it is not any particular sin of omission or commission, that sticks so close to my conscience, as the sin of my nature; without the blood of Christ, that will damn me."

The poems of Isaac Watts were composed in this tradition. Several of his songs persist in twentieth-century anthologies of children's lyrics. He has a niche in the "Lives" of Johnson, who in the condescending manner he often assumed toward schoolmasters and matters pertaining to children, holds that Watts is "at least one of the few poets with whom youth and ignorance may be safely pleased." Taking further notice of the divine's preoccupation with childhood, Johnson writes that Watts "condescended to lay aside the scholar, the philosopher, and the wit, to write little poems of devotion, and systems of instruction, adapted to their wants and capacities, from the dawn of reason through its gradations of advance in the morning of life. Every man, acquainted with the common principles of human action, will look with veneration on the writer, who is at one time combating Locke, and at another making a catechism for children in their fourth year. A voluntary descent from the dignity of science is perhaps the hardest lesson that humility can teach." He credits Watts with having overcome the blunt, coarse, and inelegant style of the dissenters by showing them that "zeal and purity might be expressed and enforced by polished diction." It was by Johnson's recommendation that the poems of Watts were included in the collection for which Johnson wrote his "Lives."

Watts was indeed an innovator. He defied Calvinistic tradition in many ways, but always successfully, as the vogue of his books in the eighteenth century indicates. In composing his hymns it was necessary to ignore the embargo Calvin had laid on everything but metrical psalms and canticles. Although hampered also by the dearth of



tunes, his hymns, many of them for children, took the dissenting world by storm. He gave "an utterance, till then unheard in England, to the spiritual emotions, and made hymn singing a fervid devotional force." The *Divine Songs for Children* and *Moral Songs* (1720), which ran through one hundred editions before 1750, was, according to Canon Leigh Bennett, the first child's hymn book in English.<sup>1</sup> This path-breaking collection is made up of thirty-six songs, the book being directed to "all that are concerned in the education of children." The opening sentence of his *Preface* reminds one of the seriousness of Janeway. "It is an awful and important charge that is committed to you." Then follow paragraphs of apology for the use of verse. His third reason is to the point: "This will be a constant furniture for the minds of children, that they may have something to think upon when alone, and sing over to themselves. This may sometimes give their thoughts a divine turn, and raise a young meditation. Thus they will not be forced to seek relief for an emptiness of mind, out of the loose and dangerous sonnets of the age."

His titles indicate the kind of furniture Watts thought fit for little minds. Some are of a general nature: *General Song of Praise to God, Praise for Creation and Providence, Praise for the Gospel, Excellency of the Bible*. These are phrased in simple diction adapted to children. Then follow more specific subjects, in a more imaginative strain, *Praise for Mercies Spiritual and Temporal*, for instance.

How many children in the street  
Half naked I behold!  
While I am clothed from head to feet,  
And covered from the cold.

<sup>1</sup> But compare Bishop Ken's "Manual of Prayers for Winchester Scholars" (1674), and "Hymns for Morning, Evening, and Midnight" (1695).

Patriotism is inculcated in *Praise for Birth and Education in a Christian Land*:

'Tis to thy sovereign grace I owe  
That I was born on British ground;  
Where streams of heavenly mercy flow,  
And words of sweet salvation sound.<sup>2</sup>

I would not change my native land  
For rich Peru with all her gold;  
A nobler prize lies in my hand,  
Than East or Western Indies hold.

Practical application of moral precepts to the daily life of children is made in *Against Lying, Love Between Brothers and Sisters, Against Scoffing and Calling Names, Taking God's Name in Vain, Against Idleness and Mischief, Evil Company, Pride in Clothes, and Obedience to Parents*. Of this group, *Against Quarreling and Fighting* has persisted to our day.

Let bears and lions growl and fight,  
For God hath made them so;  
Let dogs delight to bark and bite,  
For 'tis their nature too.

But, children, you should never let  
Such angry passions rise;  
Your little hands were never made  
To tear each other's eyes.

*Against Idleness and Mischief*, which is also familiar, has survived because its phrasing as well as its moral is neat. The language and imagery are conceived in the admiring mood of childhood.

<sup>2</sup> Vain of our beauteous isle, and justly vain,  
For freedom here, and Health, and Plenty reign;  
We different lots contemptuously compare,  
And boast, like children, of a favourite's share.  
(Langhorne's *Enlargement of the Mind*, 1763).

How doth the little busy bee  
Improve each shining hour,  
And gather honey all the day  
From every opening flower!

How skilfully she builds her cell!  
How neat she spreads the wax!  
And labours hard to store it well  
With the sweet food she makes.

Even partial quotation serves to indicate his approach to the child mind. The place which animals held in the poetry of the century has already been noticed. Animals are in fact the first active interest of children. Kipling in the *Just So Stories* and the *Jungle Books* appealed to the same keen delight of children in animal life as the early Watts in the illustrative stanzas of his songs. Grimm's *Fairy Tales* teem with animals that are often humanized agents in the action. One need not look for a literary antecedent in Aesop's *Fables*, which were almost universally read by children at this time, or in the *Bestiary*, Old Testament prophecy, New Testament accounts of the Christ child, or in the Saints Legends of the infancy of Christ. The folk lore of all peoples is crowded with animals. Watts was sufficiently attuned to the child mind to introduce naturally the phenomena of animal life.

Children are conceived dramatically as speaking in a simple didactic way. This manner is easily convincing in stanzas where the illustrative matter is visualized. Biblical illustrations are also introduced in a homely phrasing that bears witness to the imaginative vigor and simplicity of the poet's style. In *Love Between Brothers and Sisters* the first stanza suggests a picture of street brawls, and brothers and sisters at peace in the home. The second stanza opens with "Birds in their little nests agree." In the third he speaks of clubs and naked swords, the latter not poetic li-



cense, as swords were carried at that time. Watts adheres to his purpose of sinking the language to the level of a child's understanding. As he is careful to avoid artificial adornment, so he usually succeeds in bringing forward Biblical instances in colloquial and idiomatic phrasing:

The Devil tempts one mother's son  
To rage against another;  
So wicked Cain was hurried on  
Till he had killed his brother.

Watts was professedly liberal in his conception of a body of verse for children. "So that you will find here nothing that savours of a party; the children of high and low degree, of the Church of England or Dissenters, baptized in infancy, or not, may all join together in these Songs." His songs nevertheless were conditioned by the sectarian notions of his immediate public. It conceived of all poetry as vain and dangerous, and preferred the flattest translations of the psalms, sung in tunes of equal dullness. Watts himself takes note of the narrower view of life while meditating in a grove, when he warns off vain thoughts by saying that no Phyllis shall infect the air with her unhallowed name. The sterner elements of Janeway come to the surface in such songs as *Solemn Thoughts of God and Death*, *Heaven and Hell*, and *Danger of Delay*. In *Scoffing and Calling Names* the grim reality of the anthropomorphic conception comes out when the child is made to exclaim

Great God, how terrible art thou  
To sinners e'er so young!

The limitations of the pessimistic traditions that he inherits lead Watts, as in *Danger of Delay*, into unrelieved glooms. Children for whom he intended his songs were not permitted to live in a delightful period which is made

happy through the absence of self-consciousness and ignorance of life. The child is led to ask why it should say that it is yet too early to think of death, for a flower may fade before noon, and the child may die this day.

'Tis dangerous to provoke a God!  
His power and vengeance none can tell;  
One stroke of his Almighty rod  
Shall send young sinners quick to Hell.

It is this strain in Watts that has led writers on children to class him as of the revengeful school. Tradition and environment were again too strong for him in the beautiful *Cradle Hymn*, which he need not have printed apologetically at the end of his collection of songs. The poem shows the conflict between the gentle love of the man Watts and the theology of the sectarian Watts. The lovely opening stanza with its delicate conception of the infant and the blessing gently falling upon it, shades into less appealing emotions of the mother who becomes incensed over the "cursed sinners" who could provide nothing but a manger for their lord. It makes her angry to read the shameful story of how the Lord was abused. She tells her infant that he has been saved from "burning flame", "bitter groans", and "endless crying." Alice Morse Earle impatiently dismisses the poem: "This certainly seems an ill-phrased and exciting lullaby, but is perhaps what might be expected is the notion of a soothing cradle hymn from a bigoted old bachelor." Although one may agree with the statement in the particular instance which called it forth, it is historically somewhat unfair in view of the advanced position taken by Watts in the composition of poems for children. Severely limited as he was by his antecedents and environment, Watts is not altogether a bigot either in his life or in his songs for children. To be sure, his ser-

mons and *Horae Lyricae* are with "rank Geneva weeds run o'er," but much in the same way and for the same reasons that the work of the neo-classical poets is embellished with cupids and Greek and Roman goddesses. Sprat was horrified that Milton should have been named in a Latin epitaph on the tomb of J. Philipps in Westminster Abbey, and ordered the offensive line obliterated. Although there was much bitter wrangling between Puritans and the Establishment, Watts showed his liberal spirit in that he would not impose a belief in the Trinity on independent ministers, and in that he was willing to surrender the doctrine of infant baptism if the Baptists would forego immersion. In the dismal *Young Men and Maidens, Old Men and Babes* a parenthetical aside illuminates the man on the liberal side, which could not be wholly suppressed. And as for the accusation that he was a bachelor, a study of eighteenth-century poetry will reveal that a large part of the poetry of the century was in the hands of bachelor poets.

In the encyclopedic nature of his mind Watts was a true son of the eighteenth century. Every possible phase of his parishioners' education, even to the minutiae of their amusements, was noticed by him. His range lies from an essay on the art of reading and writing English with a variety of instructions for true spelling, to an attempt at a *Brief System of Ontology*. He wrote on "A Preservation from the sins and follies of Childhood and Youth, or a brief account of the sins, vices, and frailties to which Childhood and youth are liable," etc. He composed prayers for the use of children. They are graded carefully from childhood to youth. In verse and prose he provided for his parishioners a visualization of their aspirations, desires, experiences, and theological convictions, from the cradle to the time of their appearance before the throne of the Al-



mighty. We come upon cradle songs, elegies, sick-bed prayers, didactic pieces, and hymns of praise. In all of these there are unmistakable signs of a true appreciation of childhood and a recognition of the interests of children. Considered from the purely secular point of view, warped as the man is by professional and theological preoccupations, and conditioned and limited as he is by tradition, so that we find children innocently playing the tempter's part, fearing eternal doom, or drawing the heart of man from a Calvinistic conception of God, yet amid the gloom of the *Mourning-Piece* they are

Children, those dear young limbs, those tenderest pieces,  
Of your own flesh, those little other selves,  
How they dilate the heart to wide dimensions.

Such phrasings, imbedded as they often are in brimstone lines that Mrs. Trimmer eliminated when she compiled his songs at the close of the century, make Watts an exceptional figure during the first half of the century. His own limitations were clear to him: "May some happier genius promote the same service that I proposed, and by superior sense, and sweeter sound, render what I have written, contemptible and useless." What is no longer congenial has been superseded. Four of the thirty-six songs for children are still widely read in contemporary anthologies of children's verse, and others are occasionally quoted.

In addition to extensive catechetical exercises in the schools, children were subjected to cross-examination at home. Such a secular publication as Defoe's *Family Instructor*, which achieved a nineteenth edition in 1809, reflects the pitiless self-analysis indicated in the songs of Watts. The dialogue in which Defoe carries on his instruction is divided into three parts: 1) Father and Child; 2) Mother and Child; 3) Husband and Wife. It was De-

foe's belief that the questions asked are "proper even to a child . . . the author has endeavored to produce the question with an air of mere nature, innocence, and childhood . . . and the child's understanding may justly be supposed to have proposed them . . . our child asks but very little of his father, but what a child of that age may be very capable of asking." While catechising the child, Defoe has his eye on the sins of the father also, for at one point in the dialogue we find an aside to the effect that here the child cries, and the father blushes, or at least he ought to have done so. Upon the mention of eternal hell fire, conviction works in the child, and it weeps. There is the pitifully natural plea of the child, "I be'nt big enough yet." A typical question put into the mouth of the child is: "What will become of me then, father, if I was wicked when I was born?" That the language is not altogether level with the child's comprehension is clear from the father's definition of faith: "And faith, child, is a fiducial, filial confidence." Defoe's prose has all the gloom, but none of the simplicity and occasional charm of Watts's poetry for children.

The inherent interest of mankind in supernatural life, and the romantic attraction of things outside and beyond the experiences of mortal life, were not satisfied in other than dissenting circles by theological explanations of a personal devil who interfered in the life of man. The terrible realities of the concrete Calvinistic conceptions, and their immediate application to the commonest activities of children, precluded an appeal to the imaginative play interest of children. In fact, one of the chief incentives of Watts was the hope that his poems would serve as a substitute for secular works that fell into the hands of Dis-

senting children. Among men of letters of a different cast, the kind of play interest that children find in goblins and fairies was condemned as out of harmony with the dictates of reason. In the estimation of Buckingham, the light of plain reason, which was spread by Hobbes, banished such fantastic forms as ghosts; after Hobbes, men no longer "in dark ignorance lay." And what the classicist poets thought of "Gothic night" as applied to all ages but their own is well known. Although it would seem that between the dissenters on the one hand and the followers of the enlightenment on the other, the opportunities for a child's imaginative escape were slim, nevertheless poets bear witness down through the century to the presence of fairies, outlaws, witches, and other wonders that appeal to childhood in all ages. While the fashionable literature of the metropolis was flourishing in the reign of Anne and the first George, a love of Spenser and Shakespeare and Milton was growing. The popular ballads were noticed even by Addison in the famous comment on *Chevy Chase*. While this literary leaven was at work in high places, the humble ballads hawked by chapmen, and the chap books themselves, kept alive ancient folk traditions of fairies, witches, and ghosts.

At the cottage fireside and at the nurse's knee, highborn and cottage children alike kept continuously in touch with the marvelous and supernatural. Age-old tales, "To cheat our children with to rest," persisted during the days before the brothers Grimm collected them in book form. Even the moral Cotton hoped that his didactic pieces would have the pulling power of fairy tales: "like fairy tales to please the child." John Gilbert Cooper saw fairies and elves capering about the banks of Trent. Young's *Epistle to Lord Landsdowne* exalts Shakespeare at the expense of Corneille.



Young thinks of the self-conscious artistry of Corneille after every scene, but of Shakespeare only after the fall of the curtain, so great is his verisimilitude:

His witches, fairies, and enchanted isle,  
Bid us no longer at our nurses smile.

Johnson says that Collins "loved fairies, genii, giants, and monsters; he delighted to rove through the meanders of enchantment." William Erskine's continuation of the *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* weaves in the popular superstition of changelings.

Soft o'er the floor the treacherous fairies creep,  
And bear the smiling infant far away;  
How starts the nurse, when, for her lovely child  
She sees at dawn a gaping idiot stare.  
O snatch the innocent from the demons wild,  
And save the parents fond from fell despair.

Mackenzie may write of Gothic jargon, but in *The Old Maid* he notices goblins, and his Old Maid depends on her fairy tales, which compete with fables, to attract children.

Tho' ne'er from her embrace had children sprung,  
Yet alien imps with kindness would she greet,  
And oft with pleasure heard the lisping tongue,  
And gave the promised meed of candied sweet;  
And oft the tale of wonderment she told,  
Of Fayes, that gambled o'er the circling ground,  
And birds, that taught the moral lore of old,  
Then strewed the snowy comfits all around;  
Thilk would she see them glean with looks of grace,  
And stroked the flaxen pole, and blessed the smiling face!

James Grahame in *Sabbath Walks* notes how

Children would run to meet him on his way,  
And lead him to a sunny seat, and climb  
His knee, and wonder at his oft-told tales.

(*An Autumn Sabbath Walk*)

Gray's *Long Story* gives an insight into the lively superstitions of country folk who suspect "a wicked imp, they call a poet,"

Who prowled the country far and near,  
 Bewitched the children of the peasants,  
 Dried up the cows, and lamed the deer,  
 And sucked the eggs, and killed the pheasants.<sup>1</sup>

Even Shenstone, whose countryside is most often peopled with nymphs and fauns "or naiad leaning o'er her tinkling urn," had attempted the story of St. Kenelm, the boy martyr. But the habit of the age is too strong for him, and he soon loses the romantic story in long stanzas of moralizing.<sup>2</sup>

Like Thomas Warton, the poets very frequently found the "ways of hoar antiquity" not rough and barren, "but strewn with flowers"; and publishers' announcements indicate a persistent interest in fairy tales. The fairy element creeps into the lines of Tickell, Swift, Lyttleton, Akenside, and Parnell; and Gay's portrayal of the quack doctor and his mountebanks emphasizes the wide appeal of ballads like *Children in the Wood*. Although Johnson ridiculed ballads in his *Burlesque* on the "tender infant" that fell on a stone and became a "squealing child," they persisted among the common people and grew in popularity with cultivated readers. Joseph Mather, a Yorkshire poet, has memorialized a ballad monger who sang in taverns to advertise his wares, and Wordsworth in *The Prelude* (V, 211) writes of

<sup>1</sup> See Blake's illustration for this passage in *William Blake's Designs for Gray's Poems* (reproduced full-size in monochrome or colour from the unique copy belonging to His Grace the Duke of Hamilton).—Oxford University Press, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Delight in fairies is expressed in Mary Lamb's *The Fairy*:  
 If I had such dreams, I would sleep a whole year:  
 I would not wish to wake while a fairy was near.

ballad tunes,

Food for the hungry ears of little ones.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt many children were in the audience at the mountebank show of Gay's quack doctor, and were deeply moved by the singing of *Children in the Wood*. Gay, who was a native of Devonshire, is sufficiently partial to homely material to enlarge on the sentimental effect of this ballad. While the doctor was selling his balsams and pills, Jack Pudding in his "party-colored jacket" entertained the country folk with songs about raree-shows and the feats of Punch.

Then sad he sung the Children in the Wood;  
Ah! barbarous uncle, stained with infant blood!  
How blackberries they plucked in deserts wild,  
And fearless at the glittering falcon smiled:  
The little corpse the robin-red-breasts found,  
And strowed with pious bill the leaves around.  
Ah! gentle birds! if this verse last so long,  
Your names shall live for ever in my song.

(*The Shepherd's Week, Saturday*)

The last line indicates that the poet of refinement thought he was doing the lowly ballad a service by memorializing it to posterity. He could not know the high esteem in which ballads were to be held in less than a half century. The passage, coming as it does in 1714, is remarkable for its summary of the simple story, and for the poet's frankly expressed sympathy. He employs the ballad as more than a mere literary device to be passed over in a colorless reference. The ballad is recognized as an emotional force in the program of the mountebank, and the poet is himself car-

<sup>1</sup> Swift's *Baucis and Philemon* tells of  
The ballads pasted on the wall,  
Of Joan of France and English Moll,  
Fair Rosamond and Robin Hood,  
The Little Children in the Wood.



ried into sympathy by the details. With Lilly-bullero, the Irish Trot, the Bower of Rosamond, and Robin Hood, Chevy Chase is also sung with its woeful tale of

Wars to be wept by children yet unborn.

For the purposes of our study, Gay's *Shepherd's Week* is noteworthy for its emphasis on folk lore. When childhood emerges in poetry, there emerge with it the nurse, fairy tales, the schoolmistress and schoolmaster, and other accessories. Gay's *An Apparition*, with its "nurse-invented lies," is likewise of interest as showing the persistence of humble matter. In it we are told some of the stories which "descend from son to son." Gay can not, of course, any more than Shenstone later, escape from the moral implications and didactic possibilities of such stories. He must moralize the efficacy of *Children in the Wood* in bringing offenders to account. In his opinion such ballads have been known to arouse the "fraudful guardian's fright" to the extent of compelling him to restore illgot gains. In an age that at any rate pretended to shun anything but known truths, it was necessary to make the supernatural palatable by calling attention to its practical value in the given instance.

*Children in the Wood* was one of the most popular ballads of the century; poets referred to it constantly; and the chap books gave both verse and prose forms (*The Most Lamentable and Deplorable History of the Two Children in the Wood*), with at least one instance of a variant obviously based on the ballad: *The Distressed Child in the Wood; or the Cruel Unkle*.<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth notices Chil-

<sup>1</sup> The traditional fairy tale motive of the cruel stepmother is noticed in J. Merrick's *Ode to Fancy*:

And babes, who owe their shortened date  
To cruel step-dame's ruthless hate.

dren in the Wood in *The Excursion*,<sup>1</sup> but more winningly in *Redbreast Chasing the Butterfly*, where he is shocked at the predatory habits of the bird

That, after their bewildering,  
Covered with leaves the little children,  
So painfully in the wood.

It was his favorite ballad, and was noticed by him in *Descriptive Sketches*; he also quoted a stanza in the prefatory remarks to *Lucy Gray*.

At the cottage fireside in Beattie's *The Minstrel* (1770-1777), when the driving snow had shut the cottagers in, the beldam ("instructed by tradition hoar") told stories and sang ballads while the nut-brown ale went the rounds. She told of moonlight revels of the fairies,

Or hags, that suckle an infernal brood,  
And ply in caves the unutterable trade,  
Midst fiends and spectres, quench the Moon in blood,  
Yell in the midnight storm, or ride the infuriate flood.

When horror had been raised to the highest pitch in the staring and trembling rustics about the fire, the ballad of the nut-brown maid was sung to relieve tension. Then she told in a gentler strain

A tale of rural life, a tale of woes,  
The orphan babes and guardian uncle fierce.

This simple story, above all others, seems to have been told con amore:

To latest times shall tender souls bemoan  
Those helpless orphan babes by thy fell arts undone.

Like Gay, Beattie can not refrain from indicating the outlines of the story, but he does so with greater realization of the child element:

<sup>1</sup> Book VII, 90.

Behold, with berries smeared, with brambles torn,  
 The babes now famished lay them down to die:  
 Amidst the howl of darksome woods forlorn,  
 Folded in one another's arms they lie;  
 Nor friend nor stranger hears their dying cry.

This tale was intended especially for the child Edwin, whose sense of justice it was meant to stir:

A stifled smile of stern vindictive joy  
 Brightened one moment Edwin's starting tear:  
 "But why should gold man's feeble mind decoy,  
 And innocence thus die by doom severe?"  
 O Edwin! while thy heart is yet sincere,  
 The assaults of discontent and doubt repel . . .  
 Nor be thy generous indignation checked,  
 Nor checked the tender tear to Misery given.

White's *Childhood* tells how the poet and other children begged of the maid the story of the wicked guardian, and of how they were moved:

At each pause we wrung our hands and wept  
 Sad was such tale, and wonder much did we  
 Such hearts of stone there in the world could be.

Charles Lamb, who loved sentiment where he found it, made use of the ballad in his lines to the incomparable Siddons.

Anon the tear  
 More gentle starts, to hear the Beldame tell  
 Of pretty babes, that loved each other dear,  
 Murdered by cruel Uncle's mandate fell.

Only one other ballad vies with this in popularity, and that is *Cherry Chase*. A favorite phrase is "child unborn," as in Mason's *Il Bellicoso*:

How the child, that's yet unborn,  
 May rue Earl Percy's hound and horn.



Wordsworth, in lines which do not appear in the *Thanksgiving Ode* (1816) as now printed, recalls how he imbibed patriotic sentiments from ballads sung to him in childhood:

Land of our fathers! loved by me  
Since the first joys of thinking infancy;  
Loved with a passion since I caught thy praise  
A Listener, at or on some patient knee,  
With an ear fastened to rude ballad lays.

It was in fact at some nurse's or mother's knee, or with the father at the evening fireside, that children heard wonder stories and ballads. Thomson's *Winter* describes a cottage background that makes clear how at the very time when classical restraint in poetry was at the height of fashion in the metropolis, Gay as a country lad could have reveled in an atmosphere of romantic wonder.

Meantime the village rouses up the fire;  
While well attested, and as well believed,  
Heard solemn, goes the goblin story round,  
Till superstitious horror creeps o'er all. (617-620)

What Collins writes of the highlands is true also of England:

E'en yet preserved, how often may'st thou hear,  
Where to the pole the Boreal mountains run,  
Taught by the father, to his listening son,  
Strange lays, whose power had charmed a Spenser's ear.

Tickell's *Prospect of Peace* anticipates the romantic fireside motive by incidental homely touches in the lines which portray the returned soldier who vividly recalls his war experiences. As Tickell is writing in the detached manner of the classicists, the scene is generalized. He is not, like the romanticists, attracted to the fireside material because of the twilight mood with which it is readily merged. Neither is he interested like the romanticists in the humanitarian aspects of his material. The fond wife hugs her

"rough lord" and hangs on his words while he relates stories of battlefields. His children smile and tremble in turn as he marks feigned trenches in the spilled wine, sets the "inverted fort" before them, and indicates how mines whirled whole battalions to the skies.

The little listening progeny turn pale,  
And beg again to hear the dreadful tale.

This is a mere glimpse, but underlying the couplet is a bit of true observation that, in the desire of the children for a repetition of the exciting story, is in harmony with the spirit of childhood.

In *A Night Piece*, Mickle's winter evening musings carry him to thoughts of grandsires who by winter firesides are relating their youthful adventures with Marlborough's armies. These events are remote enough to be narrated in the same mood as a "monkish tale." In this connection the poet thinks of recent events that took place during the Seven Years' War on the continent. These too will soon be traditional matter for a fireside story to be told to children.

And soon the days shall come,  
When Prussia's hinds shall wild adventures tell  
Of Fred'ric and his brothers, such as oft  
The British labourer, by winter's fire,  
Tells to his wondering children, of the feats  
Of Arthur and his knights, and Celtic wars.

In *Vicissitude* the cottager is again telling stories before his winter fire. While the tempests blow without, he cheers the circle with heroic tales and knightly loves of former days.

The long-contented evening sweet he cheers;  
While from his day-sport on the ice-bound stream,  
Weary returned, with wonder and delight,  
Unrazored youth the various legend hears.

Thomas Penrose in the *Elegy (leaving the River of Plate)* on members of the crew lost in the burning of a warship, heightens the pathos of his lines by alluding to the story hour:

In vain their infants' lisping tongues inquire,  
And wait the story on their father's knee.

In *Lochleven* (1766), Bruce, who like Thomson looks upon the cottage hearth as the symbol of peaceful contentment and innocence, links childhood with the story group. Gaping swains and children sit cozily before the blazing hearth while an aged peasant relates stories of other times. Bruce shows a tendency to individualize this village chronicler by writing of him in the first person in a mood of personal recollection, but the children are still generalized as "circling round the fire."<sup>1</sup>

Mackenzie's *Pursuits of Happiness* recognizes the close ties established between age and childhood during the story-hour,

Where truth sat brooding, like a white-plumed dove,  
O'er infant friendship, and o'er infant love;  
The fairy tale by simple nurses told,  
And memory rushing in the songs of old.

Individualization is more closely approached in *The Inventory* (1786), in which Burns gives intimate glimpses of the cottage household in which there are three mischievous boys,

Run deils for ranting an' for noise.

One is a driver of a team, another a thresher's assistant,  
while

Wee Davock hauds the nowt in fother.

<sup>1</sup> In Goldsmith's *The Traveller*, the pilgrim "With many a tale repays the nightly bed."



Their father reports that he rules them with discretion, although he must often "labor them completely." Every night, and especially on Sunday, he examines them shrewdly on the "questions." The poet's unconventional description of Davock's recitation of his lessons from memory is conceived with convincing detail. The little fellow is not a lay figure, but a real child. His father has been persistent in his nightly quizzing,

Till, faith! wee Davock's grown sae gleg,  
Tho' scarcely langer than your leg,  
He'll screed you off "Effectual Calling",  
As fast as ony in the dwelling.

The cottager's "sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess" is less fully individualized by the father's remark that the features of the "bonie, sweet wee lady" resemble his:

She stares the daddy in her face.

In *Wilford Churchyard*, White expresses a preference for burial in village ground, where, unlike in city burial places, the dead are respected by shepherds and cottagers.

I've seen  
The labourer, returning from his toil,  
Here stay his steps, and call his children round,  
And slowly spell the rudely sculptured rhymes,  
And, in his rustic manner, moralise.

White's thoughts turn in *Clifton Grove* to the fireside of those who are more fortunate than he. As twilight deepens into night he can no longer hear the strokes of the woodman who had been busy in the dingle since early morning. In the inevitable contrast between wicked city night pleasures and natural pastoral relaxation, he prefers the simple joys of the laborer who now

wears the social smile,  
Released from day and its attendant toil,  
And draws his household round their evening fire,  
And tells the oft-told tales that never tire.

Such ancient tales did not depend solely, however, on oral transmission; they were retailed for common people in chap books, to which children must have had access directly, or indirectly, through the story-hour which would adapt to their comprehension what the parent had himself enjoyed in the chap books.<sup>1</sup> These diminutive paper-covered publications of twenty-four pages no doubt existed before 1700, but were at the height of their popularity during and after the reign of Queen Anne. They flourished until 1800, but declined after that date with the advent of penny magazines and Chambers's tracts and miscellanies. Most of them emanated, in the earlier years of the century, from the press of the Diceys in Aldemary Churchyard. They were hawked about the country-side by itinerant pedlars known as chapmen, who carried the booklets in a bag with their needles and notions. Chatterton's Tervono, in *Frag-*

<sup>1</sup> Cawthorn's *The Birth and Education of Genius* implies oral tradition as well as book material (probably chap books):

Time now had rolled, with smooth career,  
Our hero through his seventh year.  
Though in a rustic cottage bred,  
The busy imp had thought and read:  
He knew the adventures, one by one,  
Of Robin Hood and Little John;  
Cou'd sing with spirit, warmth, and grace,  
The woful hunt of Chevy Chace;  
And how St. George, his fiery nag on,  
Destroyed the vast Egyptian dragon.  
Chief he admired that learned piece,  
Wrote by the fabulist of Greece,  
Where Wisdom speaks in crows and cocks,  
And Cunning sneaks into a fox.

ment, at the age of six bartered with "the ragged chapman" and won from him "every favourite taw." Children in the Lake District of Cumberland no doubt looked forward to the seasonal visit of the hawker. Wordsworth wrote in the eighth book of *The Prelude*:

From far, with basket, slung upon her arm,  
Of hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—  
Some aged woman finds her way again,  
Year after year a punctual visitant!<sup>1</sup>

Among the chap books were stories of edification, though these were in the minority. Such is *A Timely Warning to rash and disobedient Children, Being a strange and wonderful relation of a young gentleman in the Parish of Stepheny in the suburbs of London, that sold himself to the Devil for twelve years to have power of being revenged on his father and mother, and how his time being expired he lay in a sad and deplorable condition to the amazement of all spectators*. . . . Although chap books are not as a rule dated, this one bears the date 1721. Chap books belong to prose literature, but often they break into verse, and upon occasion are wholly in verse, as, for instance, *The Children's Example*, showing "How one Mrs. Johnson's Child of Barnet was tempted by the Devil to forsake God . . . swear, tell lies, and disobey her parents . . . resisted Satan . . . with her dying speeches desiring young children not to forsake God, lest Satan should gain power over them." Ashton condemns this type as rubbish:

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth hoped that he might be able to "produce songs, poems, and little histories that might circulate among other good things in this way. . . . Indeed, some of the poems which I have published were composed, not without a hope that at some time or other they might answer this purpose." (1808)—Quoted in Lie-nemann, *op. cit.*, p. 162.



As this child went to school one day  
Through the churchyard she took her way,  
When lo! the Devil came and said,  
Where are you going, pretty Maid?

After some hesitation she answered,

To school I am going, Sir (said she).

After further hesitation, which under the circumstances was natural enough, she says,

"In name of Jesus I command!"  
At which the Devil instantly  
In flames of Fire away did fly.

The edification of these stories was probably willingly endured for such melodramatic entrances and exits.

Although such books were bought for children, they were probably less interesting to them than the more fascinating tales of wonder and adventure mentioned in the earliest notices of chap books. In 1708 the "Weekly Comedy" (Jan. 22) enumerates *Jack and the Giants*, *The King and the Cobbler*, and *Tom Thumb*.<sup>1</sup> In the *Tatler*, Steele speaks through Bickerstaff, who says of his godson, aged eight: "I find he has very much turned his studies, for about twelve months past, into the lives and adventures of Don Bellianis of Greece, Guy of Warwick, The Seven Champions, and other histories of the age.—He would tell you the mismanagements of John Hickathrift, find fault with the passionate temper of Bevis of Southampton, and loved St. George for being Champion of England." There

<sup>1</sup> Tom Thumb and Jack Horner are also, at least in part, in verse.

Jack Horner was a pretty lad  
Near London he did dwell,  
His father's heart he made full glad,  
His mother loved him well.

were also stories of the diabolic, such as *Dr. Faustus*, the long speaking title of which must have been irresistible; of superstition, as in the books interpreting dreams and moles; legendary tales like those of Robin Hood and *Children in the Wood*; and historical tales like *Fair Rosamond*. The favorites were, however, romantic tales like *Fortunatus*, *Reynard the Fox*, *Jack and the Giants*, *Tom Hickathrift*, and others mentioned by Steele. Criminal stories like that of the apprentice *George Barnwell* (*Youth's Warning Piece or the Tragical History of George Barnwell*), and biographical accounts like those of *Robinson Crusoe* were equally popular, easily taking the edge off the rude couplets of a chap book version of *Joseph and his Brethren*. The eternal longing of children for romance is faithfully reflected in White's *To the Genius of Romance*, where the poet names his favorite stories with bated breath:

Oh! thou who, in my early youth,  
When fancy wore the garb of truth,  
Wert wont to win my infant feet. . . .

White mentions Robin Hood, Sherwood Forest, Greensleeve, and Blue-Beard.<sup>1</sup>

Such were the delights of the eighteenth-century household after the pedlar's pack had been ransacked ("humbler works, the pedlar's pack supplied," *Parish Register*, Part I).

These are the Peasant's joy, when placed at ease,  
Half his delighted offspring mount his knees.

(*Parish Register*, Part I.)

The "histories" carried children out of their environment to ages past. The *History of Thomas Hickathrift* hardly

<sup>1</sup> See Cowper (*Conversation*):

Guy Earl of Warwick and fair Eleanore,  
Or giant-killing Jack, would please me more.

stood in need of advertising catches to commend it to children or even to their elders:

He that does buy this little book,  
Observe what you in it do look.  
When you have read it, then may say,  
Your money is not thrown away.

The opening sentence is characteristic in its ability to transport the child into a strange world of adventure: "In the reign before William the Conqueror, I have heard in ancient history that there dwelt a man in the parish of the Isle of Ely, in the county of Cambridge, whose name was Thomas Hickathrift," and so on to the end of the romantically crammed sentence which is at the same time the paragraph.

In addition to chap books not specifically intended for their perusal, children found delight in appropriating standard works of literature composed for their elders. With no capacity for appreciating irony or satire, child nature could nevertheless satisfy its craving for adventure in *Gulliver's Travels*;<sup>1</sup> and with an entire ignorance of Bunyan's allegorical intention, children might yet be fascinated by the simple concreteness with which the adventures of Christian are set forth. Crusoe's adventures were early condensed to the limits of the chap book, but there is at the same time evidence that Defoe's account found an early if not immediate place in the affections of schoolboys. More generous than twentieth-century librarians, those who had the supervision of children's reading seem to have practiced what Wordsworth stated as an absolute conviction, "that children will derive most benefits from books which are not unworthy the perusal of persons of any age." This

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth read and enjoyed *Gulliver's Travels* at Hawkeshead.



attitude is in keeping with the shrewd observation attributed to Dr. Johnson: "Babies do not want to hear about babies; they like to be told about giants and castles, and of somewhat which can stretch and stimulate their little minds." In fact, Wordsworth's adventures in the "slender Abstract" of *Arabian Nights* (which may well have been a chap book version), and in other tales, had in his eyes a moral value. In the episode of the drowned man in Esthwaite, Wordsworth in *The Prelude* pays tribute to the genii of romance for having accustomed his imagination to such scenes as took place when the drowned man rose to the surface, with the result that the boy was not unnecessarily frightened or moved by the gruesome sight near Hawkeshead. The "little yellow, canvas-covered book" may have represented a truncated form akin to that of the chap books; at any rate the poet was so delighted that he saved his pocket money in the hope of buying an unabridged edition of the *Arabian Nights*. The vast growth of interest in Oriental literature during the eighteenth century served to open the inexhaustible storehouses of Eastern tales to the young romanticist poet.<sup>1</sup> The deep impression made on Wordsworth is revealed in *Vaudracour and Julia*, where he compares with those of Arabian fiction the "wonders that were wrought" for the youth in the poem. So attached were romanticist poets in their youth to material from the distant past, that Russell blames Cervantes for ruthlessly tearing aside the veil woven by genius of yore.<sup>2</sup>

Cowper's panegyric on his childhood friend Pilgrim has already been noticed. Mrs. Piozzi has left on record how

<sup>1</sup> Consult *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century*, by Martha Pike Conant.

<sup>2</sup> *Don Quixote* was one of the books read frequently by children in the first half of the century.

Johnson treated Bishop Percy's little daughter during a conversation on the merits of *Pilgrim's Progress*, which he valued highly. He asked her what she thought of the book. "The child answered that she had not read it. 'No! then I would not give one farthing for you,' and he set her down and took no further notice of her." Long before Crabbe noticed "Bunyan's famed pilgrim" on the cottage shelf, Franklin had saved his pennies to buy a copy. Southey charmingly recalls childhood hours spent with his cousin Margaret in reading *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Somerville's *Fortune-Hunter* bears early witness to the popularity of *Robinson Crusoe* as a boy's book; it supplemented the stirring tales told by the hero's nurse. His imagination had been so excited that

Whate'er he read or heard of old,  
Whate'er his nurse or Crusoe told,  
Each tragic scene his eyes behold.

Its value as a boy's book in the schools had evidently been recognized in England before Basedow in Germany and Rousseau in France or the Edgeworths in England had given their pedagogical approval by adopting it. At Manchester Grammar School, *Robinson Crusoe* was, together with Swift's *Gulliver*, purchased for the Holiday Library between 1725 and 1740, and President Samuel Johnson of Columbia University included *Robinson Crusoe* in the unpublished manuscript list of his readings for the year 1735-1736, when he was at the age of nine. When H. K. White wrote in one of his letters (1800), "Robinson Crusoe is allowed to be the best novel for youth in the English language," he probably at the same time gave it the stamp of his personal approval as well as reflected the judgment of the new pedagogy. Robert Bloomfield's *The Farmer's Boy* has the line

And strolls the Crusoe of the lonely fields.

Wordsworth had read the book, for in *Enterprise* he remarks upon "the various turns of Crusoe's fate."

*The Hermit, or the unparalleled Sufferings and surprising adventures of Philip Quarll*, of which Miss Yonge says that it "comes to us with the reputation of being by Daniel Defoe," and of an edition of which Edwin Pearson has found notice as early as 1727, was another of the books appropriated by children.<sup>1</sup> It had reached a twelfth edition in 1780, and Crabbe noted it among the books on the cottage shelf:

Of Hermit Quarll we read, in island rare,  
Far from mankind and seeming far from care;  
Safe from all want, and sound in every limb.

(*Parish Register*, Part I)

The edition of 1786 shows the story to be a curious mixture of the picaresque and the Rousseau love of primitive simplicity and vegetative felicity. The first part, especially, is in the temper of the return to nature. The second part is realistic, and Quarll's matrimonial entanglements—he has three wives—seem hardly to offer fit provender for the youthful imagination. The third part, written in the spirit of Crusoe's experiences on the island, is interspersed with interpretations of dreams, prayers of thanksgiving for a kind Providence, and a morbid introspective strain and analysis of sin that are bound up with vehement denunciation of worldliness and luxury, and a hatred of all things French. The book contains in extended form many of the themes of superstition, edification, and romantic adventure, together with interest in criminal matters, to be found in chap books. Voracious young readers no doubt came upon it in such a window bookshelf as Wordsworth describes in *The Excursion*. Wordsworth's and Crabbe's experience

<sup>1</sup> *Banbury Chap Books*, Edwin Pearson, London, 1890.



with borrowed books must have been typical in the decades from the seventies to the nineties. Wordsworth remarks in *Guilt and Sorrow*:

I read, and loved the books in which I read;  
For books in every neighboring house I sought,  
And nothing to my mind a sweeter pleasure brought.<sup>1</sup>

Although the roots of our highly developed modern industry of juvenile book publication are to be found in the chap books, John Newberry was the first publisher to set up as a producer of books for the amusement of children. Combining the functions of a dispenser of drugs and medicines with those of a publisher of books intended specifically for children, Newberry flourished at the sign of the Bible and Sun in Paul's Churchyard. From the fact that Goldsmith and Johnson wrote for him, his activities have been especially interesting to students of juvenile literature. His ability to advertise his wares in the newspapers gave wide circulation to his "Circle of Sciences," and to the little volumes which appealed to children. Although he too emphasized the moral feature common in children's books,

<sup>1</sup> In the royal household, books were supplemented by stage performances of Shakespeare's plays. Mr. J. Duncombe's *On the Death of Frederick Prince of Wales* (1751), which is not as barren as most occasional verse of its type, gives an intimate glimpse of the young prince at a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*:

When late I saw thee drop a tender tear  
Of feeling sympathy on Juliet's bier,  
And heard thy youthful train with sighs confess  
Humane compassion at her feigned distress.

Poets in general preferred the cottage setting for the story hour. Mr. Duncombe's lines are conceived in a different mood:

No longer now, in Kew's or Cliefden's grove,  
That prattling train shall with thee sportive rove;  
No more their stories shall thy walks beguile,  
Nor thou repay those stories with a smile.

his publications from 1745 onward mark the beginning of juvenile publications avowedly designed to furnish amusement as well as instruction.

He improved on the flimsy chap book by introducing the cover feature, gilt ornamentation being an added attraction. His skilfully worded puffs had strong pulling power in homes in which there were children. The following advertisement appeared in the *London Chronicle* for Dec. 19—Jan. 1, 1765: "The Philosophers, Politicians, Necromancers, and the learned in every faculty are desired to observe that on the first of January, being New Year's day (oh, that we all may lead new lives!), Mr. Newberry intends to publish the following important volumes, bound and gilt, and hereby invites all his little friends who are good to call for them at the Bible and Sun, in St. Paul's Churchyard, but those who are naughty to have none."<sup>1</sup> Later in the century, the Banbury publisher, Rusher, used rhymes to advertise his publications:

See Jack in his study  
Is writing a book  
As pretty as this is  
In which you may look.

The price is a penny  
For girls and for boys.  
There's more too at Rusher's,  
And pictures and toys.

And when with much pleasure  
You've read them all o'er  
Then hasten to Rusher's  
He's printing some more.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Children's Books and Reading*, by Montrose J. Moses.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Pearson, *op. cit.*

Newberry's pioneer work is notable because he published *Goody Two-Shoes* and *Tommy Trip* in a form accredited to Goldsmith, whose name is therefore associated with the first attempts to publish juvenile classics.<sup>1</sup> Washington Irving is severe in his censures when he writes that Newberry "coined the brains of authors in the times of their exigency, and made them pay dear for the plank put out to keep them from drowning." Yet when Sir Joshua Reynolds called at Green Arbour Court, where Goldsmith at the top of Break Neck Steps and at the end of Turn Again Lane wrote for children, he found this couplet:

By sports like these are all their cares beguiled,  
The sports of children satisfy the child.

It was in these squalid surroundings that Goldsmith probably edited Newberry's children's magazine *The Lilliputian*. Documentary evidence and receipts in Goldsmith's handwriting seem to exist, showing that he wrote abridged histories of England and Greece, as well as some abridgments of Old and New Testament stories, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pamela*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*,—all published by Newberry. Although it is difficult to think of the good-hearted but ponderous Johnson (who was accustomed to make little fishes talk like whales) in the role of writer or even editor of children's books, it seems that there are in the Jupp and the Hugo collections several children's books edited and prefaced by him. At any rate Johnson and Goldsmith must have discussed the problems of writing for young readers, for Boswell recounts how Goldsmith expressed the wish that he might be able to make

<sup>1</sup> Consult Charles Welsh's facsimile of the 1766 edition of *Goody Two-Shoes*. See also his *A Bookseller of the Last Century*, and a good catalogue of Newberry's books for children in *On Some Books for Children of the Last Century*.



fishes, animals, and birds talk or appear to talk "for the amusement of children."

The popularity of Newberry's books was greatest between 1750 and 1770. After this the growth and popularity of systems of education for children, and moral tales which found a place in such systems of home education, tended to crowd out fairy tales and stories of adventure. The pure delight in adventure for its own sake was greatest throughout the middle decades of the century. The delightful attitude expressed in *Clarissa Harlowe* reveals the joy of children over such publications as those of Newberry, which amused as much as they pedagogued. "I, said she, had always, from a girl, a taste for reading, though it were but Mother Goose,<sup>1</sup> and concerning fairies (and

<sup>1</sup> Although the origin of Mother Goose rhymes and their popularity in England need close study before statements can be made with accuracy, it seems, according to available evidence, that they were of French origin. The designation "Mother Goose" is first heard in the seventeenth century, when the *contes* were first published singly, after which Perrault in 1687 published *Histoires ou Contes du Tens Passé avec des Moralitez*, the authorship of which he ascribed to his son Perrault Darmanecour. The frontispiece pictures an old woman regaling a group of listeners with stories, and by her side is a placard on which is lettered:

CONTES  
DE MA  
MERE  
LOYE

It seems that a translation of Perrault's *contes* was published in English in 1729 and another in 1745. It must have been one of these, or an earlier version, with which Richardson was acquainted. Attempts have been made to identify Goldsmith, whose favorite song is said to have been "An old woman tossed in a blanket, seventeen times as high as the moon", as editor of Newberry's edition, the seventh edition of which appeared in 1777.—The Mother Goose rhymes suggest an early eighteenth-century origin of the English version.

then she took genteelly a pinch of snuff): could but my parents have let go as fast as I pulled, I should have been a very happy creature." It was fated that fairy tales and stories of adventure were to triumph as pabulum for children in the nineteenth century; but they suffered a temporary eclipse in the moral tales, which, although they were intended to interest the child, were chiefly designed to instruct.

Written largely under the stimulus of the new pedagogical activities which resulted from the enthusiasm of Rousseau, the moral tales were nevertheless not representative of the fundamentals of his teachings. As to content they lean towards Rousseau in the fervid interest shown by these amateurs in pedagogy in things as a substitute for mere word education. But even this feature probably resulted from the native spirit of protest against the classics. Moral tales were practical in the sense that they utilized the results of the scientific awakening that had carried children as well as men into fields and woods rather than into libraries. The method, however, was that of the old pedagogy. While poets had been condemning exclusive attention to the classics and book learning, they had been careful, as is obvious especially in *Tirocinium*, to retain the emphasis on the necessity of moral training. The moral tale as exemplified in one of its most popular manifestations, in Thomas Day's *Sandford and Mertoun* (1783-1789), was at bottom nothing more than a small encyclopedia.<sup>1</sup> Scientific interest in the world of natural phenomena supplied most of the subject matter, but the intention was religious and humanitarian at the same time that the child was crammed with facts.

<sup>1</sup> See also Percival's *A Father's Instructions* (1775), and the works of Mrs. Trimmer, Hannah More, Mrs. Barbauld, and the Edgeworths. *Sandford and Mertoun* is more readable than the average moral tale because Day's style was obviously influenced by chap books.

The conception of childhood even in Day and the Edgeworths was still expressed in terms of the institutional child. The aim was to make the child over, and the result was an infant prodigy in place of the natural child who was the ideal of Rousseau. Rousseau's endeavor to lose time with the child before the age of twelve, finds no recognition in the moral tales. Although influenced by Rousseau and the new spirit, these writers were, nevertheless, proceeding not on the fundamentals of Rousseau (which insisted that the child was not a little man) but on the traditional plan which treated him as though he had to be made over into the likeness of an adult as soon as possible. The moral tale was in fact a perversion or misapplication of the theories of Rousseau, for its sponsors proceeded with the method revealed in the traditional fables which, as Somerville noted early in the century, had in the happy plan of Greece and Rome "taught the brute to pedagogue the man." Although writers of moral tales substituted modern material for the contents of the ancient fable, they believed with Byrom (*Ape and the Fox*) that

Old Aesop so famous was certainly right  
In the way that he took to instruct and delight.

\*

He encouraged, by his fables, the attention of youth,  
And forced even fiction to tell them the truth.

A didactic purpose is revealed on every page of a neat little volume of poems issued by Marshall in a second edition in 1789: *Poems on Various Subjects for the Amusement of Youth*. It is bound in half calf and is illustrated by attractive oval woodcuts executed by Bewick. The poems, which are pervaded by the characteristic humanitarianism of the age, are written at children in a spirit of undisguised didacticism. In such a poem as *From a Gen-*



tleman to his Son on his Confining a Bird, the intention is to shame the child. The opening lines with their *ad hominem* attack preclude from the start anything but a superior attitude of teaching:

Horace, what greater punishment,  
Cou'd I inflict, my boy, on thee?  
And tell me what wou'd grieve thee more,  
Than thus to lose thy liberty?

Yet thou can'st take a savage joy,  
To view thy captive's fond desires;  
Thou can'st with unrelenting heart,  
Behold him beat against his wires.

The boy is plainly lectured in place of being led to feel a community of interest.

In *The Domestic Loss; or the Death of a Dog* there is profuse sentimental weeping which is itself, however, somewhat out of keeping with the bald moralizing and philosophizing that are stretched out to the length of twenty-five stanzas. The distinction between child reason and animal instinct makes the child talk priggishly in a self-congratulatory vein that recalls Watts.

If led by *instinct's* voice alone,  
That instinct *gratitude* could teach:  
Then blessed with *reason* to reflect,  
To what perfection should I reach?

How thankful should my heart o'erflow,  
For mercies that adorn the *mind*,  
For *thought, imagination, speech*,  
The privilege of *human kind*?

The difference between Watts in 1720 and these poems in 1789 is that the subject matter has in the meantime become secularized. The approach to the child mind is exactly that of the first quarter of the century. *The Negro Beggar* is

likewise written purely to start a young meditation on the humanitarian theme.

What is pity? she asked (as she wiped from her face  
The tear which bestowed an additional grace).

Other poems like *On a Young Gentleman being Desirous of a Goldfinch*, *The Drowned Flies*, *Young Philemon Accused by his Sister of Cruelty*, and *Verses Occasioned by a Young Gentleman's Hiding his Sister's Squirrel*, are conceived in the spirit of Maria Edgeworth and Mrs. Sherwood, who used the most trivial domestic incidents to point an obvious moral.

Mrs. Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781) aimed to "impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind . . . by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects, with all that he sees, all he hears . . . to lay the best foundation for practical devotion in future life." Although Mrs. Barbauld was influenced by the scientific awakening—and therefore ought to belong to those who teach through direct observation—the *Preface* indicates the conservative source of her inspiration. Among the many "rational" books for children, she finds none really suitable "except indeed Dr. Watts's *Hymns for Children*," and "These are in pretty general use." Her hymns are intended to be committed to memory and recited, so that her pupils are in reality not facing "sensible objects" but are still dependent on book learning.

The ingenuity exercised by these writers, including Maria Edgeworth, in crowding miscellaneous facts into the child mind, while at the same time injecting moral and religious instruction, is seen in the omnium gatherum that makes up Hymn VIII. In the opening paragraph the cottage motive together with the return at eve serves the purpose of inculcating thrift, industry, and affection for parents.

"See where stands the cottage of the labourer covered with warm thatch. The mother is spinning at the door; the young children sport before her on the grass; the elder ones learn to labour, and be obedient; the father worketh to provide them food: either he tilleth the ground, or he gathereth in the corn, or shaketh his ripe apples from the trees. His children run to meet him when he cometh home, and his wife prepareth the wholesome meal." Without warning the child finds himself in an exposition of what constitutes a family. Next he is instructed in what constitutes a village, with the closing sentence: "This is a village; see where it stands enclosed in green shade, and the tall spire peeps above the trees." Then follows a lesson in geography which carries the child from pole to pole. The tropics suggest the negro mother and her child "pining in captivity." In the concluding rhythms, the Monarch, who rules many states (a "hundred states"), is adjured to remember that he is responsible to God.

One phase of her method is well illustrated in Hymn IX, where she interests the child in those grains of sand in each of which the naturalistic Blake saw a world. She notes flowers growing "in the hard stone" of the wall, an observation made in a far different mood from that of Tennyson, who connects the riddle of the universe with the flower in the crannied wall. Her devotional aims do not succeed in crowding out the universal passion for fact cramming, which came with the new enthusiasm for a novel world of scientific facts, and which must have persisted to the time of Dickens, who satirizes the methods of Gradgrind in *Hard Times*. The encyclopedic nature of moral tales and juvenile publications is well illustrated in Mrs. Barbauld's prose poetry. The child who can absorb the jumble of botanical, zo-ological, astronomical, geographical, and other observations, is indeed an infant polyhistor.



It is small wonder that Wordsworth condemned fact cramming, and that Charles Lamb spoke contemptuously of this sort of thing as "stuff" which had crowded from the shelves of booksellers the fairy tales of Newberry. Wordsworth deplored the lack of imagination in such publications, and with justice, as the following passage indicates: "Many towns, and a large extent of country, make a kingdom; it is enclosed by mountains; it is divided by rivers; it is washed by seas; the inhabitants thereof are countrymen; they speak the same language; they make war and peace together; a king is the ruler thereof. Many kingdoms and countries full of people, and islands, and large continents, and different climates make up this whole world—God governeth it." If Wordsworth heard a small child recite this from memory, he might well be moved to reproach writers of the type, who, however good their intentions, did not reverence child nature.

That these writers were not interested in the child in the same sense as Rousseau, is suggested by the fact that Mrs. Trimmer and Mrs. Sherwood were the last to bear witness in England against fairies. The bold and obvious didacticism of later moral tales became even less attractive when for the influence of Madame Genlis and Madame d'Epinaÿ were substituted the dissection and analysis to which the child's mind and soul were subjected in dialogues written for him under the influence of Campe and Salzmann in the nineties. Mary Wollstonecraft found in Salzmann's *Elements of Morality* the true method of forming the heart and character of the child. In this spirit the minutest and most insignificant incidents of family life were moralized, with the inevitable moral that prosperity results from order and propriety, and punishment and unhappiness from their opposites. More attractive than the others is the *Calendar*

of *Nature* by John Aikin, in the spontaneous bits of illustrative verse; but the fundamental attitude is the same. These writers were essentially on the same basis as Isaac Watts. At all events they reveal no ability to understand and apply the fundamentals of Rousseau as revealed in the advice given to the tutor of Madame d'Epainay's son: "a child's character should not be changed; besides, one could not do it if one would, and the greatest success you could achieve would be to make a hypocrite of him. . . . No, sir, you must make the best of the character nature gave him; that is all that is required of you."<sup>1</sup>

Except for Blake's lyrics, which were not widely known, the situation at the close of the century is such as to justify not only the protests of Lamb but also the severe condemnation of Wordsworth. The writers of moral tales were not true followers of Rousseau. They had all the passion for teaching and making the child over which Rousseau had condemned. They were influenced by him only in externals, and were as didactic as Watts and the classical masters. It remained for William Blake, who was influenced by advanced ideas in philosophy, politics, and theology, to give voice to the philosophy of natural goodness and universal benevolence in the simple accents of childhood itself. In his lyrics, children themselves for the first time in the century take up the motives developed by poets during the preceding decades, and speak in their own language, bringing home in their childish accents the pleas for universal benevolence and the protests against restraint.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Jean Jacques Rousseau* by Jules Lemaitre, translated by Jeanne Mairet, p. 218.

## CHAPTER VI

### WILLIAM BLAKE

The high estimation in which the early poems of Blake are held seems all the more deserved when it is realized that he wrote his delightful lyrics about children in the very years when moral tales in prose and verse were at the height of their popularity. Blake's lyrics have a primeval freshness that has attracted readers who are not aware of the larger body of literature written during the eighteenth century for and about children. As a result, his poems about children have been singled out as (unusual phenomena in the days before Wordsworth.) To look upon Blake, however, as an odd genius, who may have been influenced by Elizabethan poetry and Swedenborg and Boehme, but who nevertheless is an isolated phenomenon among the poets of his generation, is to take a line of thought that leads to misunderstanding of the poetry he wrote before the tantalizing prophetic books. It is only by frankly treating him as a poet who was vitally influenced by the thought of his century that his debt to his predecessors in poetry, and his original contribution, can be adequately measured. If treated in its historical setting, his poetry on childhood naturally takes its place among the poetry about children in the eighteenth century. His verse clearly reveals the influences which had been at work among poets of the century.

Although valuable records that would throw light on the period before the appearance of the prophetic books have been destroyed, so that it is impossible to reconstruct



the earlier period with the same accuracy as the later ones, critics unanimously recognize in the earlier publications like the *Poetical Sketches*, Blake's indebtedness to predecessors of the "olden age." In place, therefore, of looking only to the later prophetic books to explain his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, which are the only poems of Blake that are widely read, it will be more fruitful to study them also in relation to the influences which had worked upon Blake to produce the poems of the earlier period. Before he reached the state of mind revealed in the prophetic books, Blake had read widely in English literature, and his lyrics about children, begun as early as 1784,<sup>1</sup> disclose his debt to tradition as fully as the poems in *Poetical Sketches* (1783).

In the *Introduction* to the *Songs of Innocence* he characteristically tells how he was divinely guided by a child sitting on a cloud, who laughingly directed him to pipe songs of happy cheer and to write them in a book that all may read. He obeyed the call of the child:

And I wrote my happy songs  
Every child may joy to hear.

The little book, the poems set in colored engravings made and tinted by himself, represents his contribution to the long list of books published for children after the middle of the century. The format was in keeping with juvenile publications of the time, but his engravings added a novel

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Songs from an Island in the Moon* (MS. circa 1784):

XII O, I say, you, Joe,  
Throw us the ball.

(Footnote in the Oxford Edition: "Sung by Tilly Lally, a school-boy.")

feature. It has been observed in the preceding pages how poetry for children was increasingly published from the days of Watts's *Divine Songs for Children* until, from the time of Newberry's innovations, publishers specialized in juvenile literature. Blake was himself in touch with this trade. In 1793 he published *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*. Mr. John Sampson says of this publication: "In its original form (as published in 1793) *The Gates of Paradise* was a simple picture-book 'For Children,' consisting of a frontispiece, title-page, and sixteen engraved plates of emblematic designs, the original pencil sketches for which are found in the *Rossetti MS.*"<sup>1</sup> In 1790 he adapted forty-nine engravings for Mary Wollstonecraft's translation of Salzmann's *Elementarbuch*; and the following year he engraved six plates for her *Original Stories for Children* (1791).<sup>2</sup> His intimate friend Godwin was interested in juvenile literature, and later set up as a publisher of children's books, the *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb issuing from his press. It would, therefore, be no novelty or innovation to publish the *Songs of Innocence* for children.<sup>3</sup> To be publishing for children

<sup>1</sup> The Poetical Works of William Blake, Oxford University Press, 1914, p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> Compare also "two very sweet designs" for Hayley's "Little Tom the Sailor," a series of illustrations for Hayley's "Ballads on Animals," and the charming frontispiece for T. Malkin's *A Father's Memoirs of his Child*.

<sup>3</sup> Compare *Songs of Experience: A Little Girl Lost*—

Children of the future age,  
Reading this indignant page,  
Know that in a former time,  
Love, sweet Love, was thought a crime!

was to be, in fact, working in the spirit of his most intimate friends.<sup>1</sup>

Blake justly prided himself on the delight of children of his acquaintance in the tinted engravings of his diminutive book. The picture which he made a part of each engraving (in itself not larger than five by three inches) illustrates and complements the text so as to make each page a delight to the eye. In *The Little Black Boy*, the mother is sitting under a tree with the child leaning against her. In *The Lamb* the child is standing just beyond a brook; between the child and the barn in the background are sheep; and a lamb is looking into the face of the child, whose arms are stretched out as if to receive it into his bosom. "I am happy to find a great majority of fellow-mortals who can elucidate my visions, and particularly they have been elucidated by children, who have taken a greater delight in contemplating my pictures than I even hoped."<sup>2</sup> Blake was not the first to illustrate juvenile publications, but his delicately tinted engravings are more attractive than the justly admired oval woodcuts of Bewick.

It is not necessary to read a deep symbolical meaning into the vision which prompted him to write his songs for children. Blake's biographers have noted how, as an imaginative child, he had seen a vision at the age of four and again at the age of ten; and how to the end of his life he

<sup>1</sup> "So the pen that had once tried to carve, as on a rock, the story of Samson, and 'the words of truth, that all who pass may read,' was now to become a delicate reed, and write simple sentences for any child to spell out."—*William Blake, Poet and Mystic*, by P. Berger, translated by Daniel H. Conner, Chapman and Hall, London, 1914, page 286.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Blake to the Rev. Dr. Trusler, August 23, 1799, in *Letters of Blake*, edited by G. B. Russell, Methuen, London, page 63.



disturbed his friends by insisting that he saw visions in their presence. There need be nothing mysterious or mystifying in this. He used to say to his friends, "You can see what I do if you choose. Work up imagination to the state of vision, and the thing is done." In connection with his vision of a fold of lambs in a meadow, it is interesting to note "the reply which Blake gave to a lady who asked him *where* he had descried this sight. 'Here, madam,' he replied, touching his forehead: an answer which serves to caution us against supposing that he either accepted as literal facts for himself, or wished to convey literally to others, some of the visionary or supersensuous incidents of which he made frequent mention."<sup>1</sup> If the reader will come to Blake's lyrics without preoccupations, there need be no difficulties in view of his historical position and the facts of his life.

Blake is not the first among poets to use simple language in verses intended for children. From Bishop Ken and Watts, through the time of Newberry, to writers of moral tales, there were poets and prose writers who had at least endeavored to write in language adapted to the comprehension of children, without having in any instance achieved the verisimilitude of the lipping syllables of Blake's *The Little Black Boy*. Like Burns, he gains force through ballad simplicity; like Burns, too, Blake is often homely in his phrasing, it being not uncommon to find colloquial and even ungrammatical expressions.<sup>2</sup> Blake's indebtedness to ballads and hymn-writers is obvious. Where, however, other writers, including Cowper, were satisfied to write from a restricted sectarian point of view, Blake broke

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Prefatory Memoir* by W. M. Rossetti (Aldine Blake).

<sup>2</sup> P. Berger, *op. cit.*

away from the limits of creed, and did not retain the views and subject-matter that stamped one poem as Unitarian, another as Church of England, and still another as Methodist. Variant readings preserved in connection with *Holy Thursday*<sup>1</sup> indicate that he was not even tempted to phrase a narrow view in place of a broadly human conception. Watts thought he had broken with sectarian prejudice in his songs for children, but it remained for Blake actually to shake off traditional fetters and to look upon the child with the eyes of a naturalistic philosopher, as in his *Divine Image (Songs of Innocence)*, in which man is conceived as the outline of God, so that as every man discovers a real man, he discovers God.<sup>2</sup>

For Mercy has a human heart,  
Pity a human face,  
And Love, the human form divine,  
And Peace, the human dress.

How far he is from the insularity of Watts and the bonds of creed, is clear in the inclusive closing stanza, which gives tender lyric expression to the doctrine of universal benevolence:

And all must love the human form,  
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;  
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell  
There God is dwelling too.

<sup>1</sup> *Songs of Innocence*.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, *Vision and Vesture*, p. 60.—Compare also *Auguries of Innocence*:

God appears, and God is Light,  
To those poor souls who dwell in Night;  
But does a Human Form display  
To those who dwell in realms of Day.

Blake represents the culmination of those phases of the movement that tended to emphasize childhood in connection with the insistence on universal benevolence and freedom from institutional restraint. Blake has taken up the motives of the childhood theme, and by passing them through the fiery alembic of his genius has given them the finality of phrasing that, ordinarily, only a master poet can achieve. But before a master poet may write, there must be a period of preparation. If the reader who wishes to find childhood in the poetry of the eighteenth century turns only to Blake, it will seem as though Blake had indeed conceived wholly in a spirit of originality, when as a matter of fact he is but the natural outcome of forces at work for three quarters of a century. In the following paragraphs it is the purpose to indicate how Blake grew out of the eighteenth century in his attitude toward childhood and how he enriched established motives and gave them true lyrical expression.

In *Songs of Innocence* (1789) he gives his vision of children who are in a perfect state of happiness: in *Songs of Experience* (1794) and *Auguries of Innocence* (1801-1803), and also in certain lyrics in the *Pickering Manuscript*, he protests against conditions that warp life from its true intent. Before 1790 Blake still wrote with the heart of a child. In *Songs of Innocence* the child is altogether happy because he is in spontaneous harmony with nature. In *Songs of Experience* and *Auguries of Innocence*, Blake recognizes disturbing elements in the realm of nature in so far as they affect the child. Like benevolist poets, he did not attempt a consistent application of natural goodness and universal benevolence, but recognized the intervention of facts. Like his predecessors and contemporaries, he protested vehemently against conditions and practices which he held responsible for unhappiness and suffering.



With the protest against school restraints put upon the child, Blake merges a tender regret which in the mood of the universal benevolists he brings home to the reader in an image from bird life. With a simplicity that mocks analysis, he subtly identifies bird and child. Burns alone among those who after Thomson pleaded for animals, approaches the tenderness and natural magic of Blake. In *The Schoolboy* (*Songs of Experience*), the child loves to rise on a summer morn when birds are singing on every tree; but to go to school and to sit "under a cruel eye out-worn" drives all joy away.

How can the bird that is born for joy  
Sit in a cage and sing?  
How can a child, when fears annoy,  
But droop his tender wing,  
And forget his youthful spring?

The difference between *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is indicated in the engraved frontispieces executed by Blake. In that for the first series, young children are standing at their mother's knee; in that for the second, the children are older, and are bent in grief over the bier of their dead parents. That his conception of a happy universe peopled by happy children does not square with the facts of daily observation, he holds to be due to the distortion of nature by man. Had man been content to live in the golden age of innocence, his childlike delight in God and creation would not have been perverted, and the *Songs of Experience* would not have been necessary. In *The Schoolboy*, the child who sits joyless in school, "Worn thro' with the dreary shower," appeals to its parents for freedom to live naturally:

O! father and mother, if buds are nipped  
 And blossoms blown away,  
 And if the tender plants are stripped  
 Of their joy in the springing day,  
 By sorrow and care's dismay,

How shall the summer arise in joy,  
 Or the summer fruits appear?  
 Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,  
 Or bless the mellowing year,  
 When blasts of winter appear?

In *Holy Thursday* he notes the humanitarian motive in relation to children of the poor. Is it a holy thing to see in such a rich and fruitful land as England

Babes reduced to misery,  
 Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Had man not interfered—perhaps he was thinking of fields and sky blackened with industrial smoke—children might still be living, as he had pictured them in *Songs of Innocence*, in a happy state of nature.

For where'er the sun does shine,  
 And where'er the rain does fall,  
 Babe can never hunger there,  
 Nor poverty the mind appal.

In *London* he again protests against man-made restrictions that bind the child:

In every Infant's cry of fear,  
 In every voice, in every ban,  
 The mind-forged manacles I hear.

In his Revolutionary fervor, Blake has extended Pope's objections to school discipline to include restrictions of all kinds. As in Rousseau, the child should be free as nature made him: man must not interfere. Blake has gone far

beyond Pope and West in advocating the emancipation of childhood. The advanced position of Blake is appreciated when his fiery protests are compared with the conservative suggestions of Cowper's *Tirocinium*, in which the child is brought nearer to nature by removal from the school to the home. The accents of Rousseau are unmistakable only once in the poetry of the eighteenth century. Blake alone in poetry ventured as far as the French philosopher. At times he ventured farther.<sup>1</sup>

The humanitarian motive noticed by Headley and Jerningham is fiercely transmuted by unflinching directness of phrasing, which, except for the lyric fire, is suggestive of Crabbe:

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful harlot's curse  
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,  
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.<sup>2</sup>

The war motive is merged with the protest against luxury in the "hapless soldier's sigh" which "Runs in blood down palace walls." The helpless little chimney-sweeper cries out against spiritual neglect, which Blake shadows forth in the image, "every black'ning church." In fact, *London* is a summation of most of the themes of protest that are found in benevolist poetry. The opening stanza gives Blake's version of the romantic antipathy toward city life. In the city, all is restraint and repression, and man as a result bears the marks of woe.

<sup>1</sup> *Gnomic Verses*:

The Angel that presided o'er my birth  
Said 'Little creature, framed of joy and mirth,  
Go, love without the help of anything on earth.'

<sup>2</sup> Compare the MS. variant: "From every dismal street I hear." This is nearer Crabbe.



I wander thro' each chartered street,  
 Near where the chartered Thames does flow,  
 And mark in every face I meet  
 Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

*The Chimney-Sweeper* is important because it reflects the benevolist doctrine that man is made for happiness in this world and that his happiness should therefore not be postponed to a future state. Blake's attitude of antagonism toward the church as one of the institutions that hinder rather than help the child to happiness is clearly revealed by the child itself. The humanitarian protest is no longer delivered by the poet, but instead he has one of those children who suffer most from social injustice voice the cry against neglect of children's welfare:

A little black thing among the snow,  
 Crying 'weep! 'weep! in notes of woe!  
 'Where are thy father and mother, say?'—  
 'They are both gone up to the Church to pray.

'Because I was happy upon the heath,  
 And smiled among the winter's snow,  
 They clothed me in the clothes of death,  
 And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

'And because I am happy and dance and sing,  
 They think they have done me no injury,  
 And are gone to praise God and His Priest and King,  
 Who make up a Heaven of our misery.'

These lines show that Blake was in touch with the most advanced opinion of his generation. They reflect the opinions voiced in the Revolutionary circles of Godwin and Paine. At the dinners given by the publisher Johnson, Blake met Mary Wollstonecraft, Priestley, Godwin, Holcroft, and Paine; and he seems to have been the only one of the group who dared to expose to the public gaze his extreme views on politics, for he actually wore the *bonnet-rouge*

on the street. It was Blake who later gave Paine the timely warning which saved his friend from arrest. Blake was himself tried for treason at Chichester upon the accusation of a soldier whom Blake believed to the end of his life to be an agent of the government. To take Blake out of his century, and to treat him as an isolated dreamer, is, therefore, to misunderstand him. Blake was a "daring speculator in religion and morals . . . he was and always continued a republican, and an enemy of kings and war."<sup>1</sup> He scorned priestcraft with the intensity of Shelley. In *The Garden of Love* the child returns to the green on which he had played, and there he finds a chapel he had never observed before. Over the door was written "Thou shalt not." And when he turned to the garden of love that had always blossomed with flowers, he could see nothing but tombstones,

And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

It was contrary to Blake's nature to have the child's natural desires fettered and bound.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William Rossetti, Prefatory Memoir, *Aldine Blake* (1890).

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Poems from the Rossetti MS: Why should I care for the men of Thames:*

Tho' born on the cheating banks of Thames,  
Tho' his waters bathed my infant limbs,  
The Ohio shall wash his stains from me:  
I was born a slave, but I go to be free!

Compare also Langhorne's *The Enlargement of the Mind* (1763):

Is Nature, all benevolent, to blame  
That half her offspring are their mother's shame?  
Did she ordain o'er this fair scene of things  
The cruelty of priests and kings?  
Though worlds lie murdered for their wealth or fame,  
Is Nature, all benevolent, to blame?

In *A Little Boy Lost* he pictures a martyrdom by fire. A priest overhears the child giving expression to a naturalistic sentiment. The child is voicing the thought that it is not possible for an individual to know a greater than himself.

'And, Father, how can I love you  
Or any of my brothers more?  
I love you like the little bird  
That picks up crumbs around the door.'

The priest (who in Blake's naturalistic conception represents institutional life and restraint from without) was horrified, and, while the multitude "admired the priestly care," "led him by his little coat" to the altar:

'Lo! what a fiend is here,' said he,  
'One who sets reason up for judge  
Of our most holy Mystery.'

In place of proceeding by way of the cold reasonings of his friend Godwin, Blake visualizes the situation in terms of childhood.

The weeping child could not be heard,  
The weeping parents wept in vain;  
They stripped him to his little shirt,  
And bound him in an iron chain;

And burned him in a holy place,  
Where many had been burned before:  
The weeping parents wept in vain.

Blake's fiery spirit of revolt leads him to break in with the question,

Are such things done on Albion's shore?

Although Blake frankly notices effects of the cleavage which has resulted in nature from man's interference, he is not led to disillusionment in the *Songs of Experience*. He states the cause of man's unhappiness, but also suggests the



remedy. Nature and God are not at fault. In *The Little Vagabond*, the spiritual neglect of the church is arraigned in the simple accents of a child who naively observes the difference between the bleak church and the warm and inviting alehouse.

Dear mother, dear mother, the Church is cold,  
But the Ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm;  
Besides I can tell where I am used well.

The church had long been out of touch with the masses; by the middle of the century the protests against the traditional curriculum in the established schools included among the necessary reforms, that of closer touch between priest and congregation in intelligible sermons. Boswell notes that if the masses are to be reached, it will be necessary for the church to adopt some of the enthusiasm of the dissenters. The child in Blake's poem has noticed that parsons do not regale people's souls with attractive fare and a "pleasant fire." Yet if the church were properly administered, all men would be as happy as birds in spring,

And God, like a father, rejoicing to see  
His children as pleasant and happy as He,  
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel.

Blake's remedy is that man should again return to nature; all nature is given him if he will but open his heart. In *Earth's Answer*, Earth, who hears the poet, is "covered with gray despair": man has chained himself with jealousies and fears and selfishness; he is bound by his senses and conventions. Earth calls in despair:

'Break this heavy chain  
That does freeze my bones around.  
Selfish! vain!  
Eternal bane!  
That free love with bondage bound.'

Blake's "free love" is the spirit of love that permeates poetry from Thomson to Wordsworth. But in his protest against restraining forces, he was probably also thinking more specifically of the Godwinian attitude toward the marriage bond.<sup>1</sup> The influence of Godwin and Revolutionary doctrines did not in this respect go farther than theory with Blake, for his married life was not marred by acts unbecoming a husband. In this connection it is interesting to note that he has referred in *London* to the "marriage hearse."<sup>2</sup>

The dynamic force and vivid imagery of *Songs of Experience* reveal Blake's violent energy; and he has pushed familiar eighteenth-century doctrines to daring extremes. But these qualities of superior genius should not blind the reader to the identity of his motives with those of his predecessors.

In the concentrated force of his epigrammatic protest in *Auguries of Innocence* against restraint and the popular desire to make the child over into something which he is not by nature, he is more nearly than his contemporaries a

<sup>1</sup> "In some of the earlier years of the marriage, indeed, it is said that grave conflicts of feeling and of will arose between Blake and his wife—jealousy on her part being the essential cause, or rather something on his part which occasioned her jealousy. This will surprise no one who is cognizant of the full range of Blake's writings, and who consequently knows, that his views of the sexual relation and of the marriage-tie . . . were of the most audacious possible kind."—William Rossetti, Prefatory Memoir, *Aldine Blake* (1890), p. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. *Gnomic Verses*.

Remove away that black'ning church,  
Remove away that marriage hearse,  
Remove away that man of blood—  
You'll quite remove the ancient curse.

true son of Rousseau and the Revolution. His vehement denunciations of priestcraft and dogmas that, he held, do violence to child nature, often recall his association with the Godwinian circle, and suggest also the fury of the freedom-loving Shelley. All other poets who wrote on childhood in England before and during the time of Blake, failed to understand or at least to apply Rousseau's dictum that with the child one should not gain time but lose it, by which is meant the policy of non-interference with natural development of children. He demands freedom for the child during the years of his development. Because Blake hated system as something unnatural, he would not be in sympathy with a system of education like that of Madame Genlis or Sarah Trimmer. Teaching of all kinds, by which he means interference from without by adults, is condemned. He is one with Rousseau in recognizing that the adult has his place, but he insists that the child has his inviolable place also:

He who respects the infant's faith  
Triumphs over Hell and Death.  
The child's toys and the old man's reasons  
Are the fruits of the two seasons.

The emmet's inch and the eagle's mile put all philosophy of grown-ups to shame. He who teaches the child sophisticated lore "the rotting grave will ne'er get out"; and

The babe that weeps the rod beneath  
Writes revenge in realms of death,

for man must recognize that children have a spiritual nature, and that the child, therefore, is "more than swaddling-bands." Because of man's interference, children are born only "to night," which is Blake's way of saying that they are system-bound and lacking in spiritual insight. If man



would not interpose his schemes, children would be born only to happiness.<sup>1</sup>

He senses eternity in the soul life of the child just as clearly as he sees a world in a grain of sand—all nature is linked, and every manifestation of nature demands the reverence of man in its own kind. In this respect Blake had a keen vision that was not vouchsafed to writers of moral tales, who were not willing to take the child for what God had made him. Them and all their tribe he condemns outright as unable to comprehend child nature; their efforts are—and here again he is in harmony with Shaftesbury and Rousseau—a mockery of God's creation:

He who mocks the infant's faith  
Shall be mocked in Age and Death.

In *Auguries of Innocence*, Blake has interwoven with the traditional protest against restraint a true understanding and respect for the faculties of children. In so far as he has advanced from negative protest to a positive vision, he is one of those who, beginning with the liberalizing Shaftesbury, lead to Herbart in pedagogy and Stevenson and Field in poetry. They left far behind them the traditional didactic spirit and looked upon the child with a feeling heart and clear understanding that were, as in Blake, inspired by respect and reverence for child nature.

In *Auguries of Innocence* Blake delivers his message in the mood of the benevolists. References to animal life clarify and enforce the thought of almost every epigram. The Thomsonian plea for freedom is condensed by Blake into the awe-inspiring lines:

<sup>1</sup> Every morn and every night  
Some are born to sweet delight.  
Some are born to sweet delight,  
Some are born to endless night.

A robin redbreast in a cage  
Puts all heaven in a rage.  
A dove-house filled with doves and pigeons  
Shudders Hell thro' all its regions.<sup>1</sup>

Humanitarian and charitable motives are treated throughout in the same mood, and always with a terrible intensity and "double vision."

Each outcry of the hunted hare  
A fibre from the brain does tear.  
A skylark wounded in the wing,  
A cherubim does cease to sing.

\*

The bat that flits at close of eve  
Has left the brain that won't believe.  
The owl that calls upon the night  
Speaks the unbeliever's fright.  
He who shall hurt the little wren  
Shall never be beloved by men.

■

The wanton boy that kills the fly  
Shall feel the spider's enmity.  
He who torments the chafer's sprite  
Weaves a bower in endless night.  
The caterpillar on the leaf  
Repeats to thee thy mother's grief.

The inability of writers of moral tales to take the child frankly as a child, and to reverence him without interposing conceptions foreign to child nature, is illustrated in *Poems on Various Subjects for the Amusement of Youth*, the second edition of which was published in the same year as *Songs of Innocence*. The volume is pervaded by the conventional humanitarianism of the age. The poems lack the spirit of Blake's lyrics because they were written at

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Thomson's lines on confined and caged birds in *Spring*.

children in a spirit of bald didacticism.<sup>1</sup> Children are plainly lectured instead of being led to feel the situation. Blake, on the other hand, in place of acknowledging a line of demarcation between the child and the natural phenomena of animal life, identifies the child spirit with that of the animal by a perception of the underlying unity that binds all creation. The child and animal are equally conceived with an objectivity that forbids the recognition of a line of cleavage between created beings.

Blake accepts this mystic unity as a fact, and does not interpose deductions and implications that, because they are the result of mature thought based on reading and experience, can not be in harmony with the child's thoughts on the subject. The pot-boilers of Charles and Mary Lamb (however delightful as compared with the moral tales and their congeners) and the poems of Ann and Jane Taylor fail in the authors' inability to enter truly into the child spirit. The poetry of the Taylors, delicate as the verse often is, as in *The Violet*, and *Thank You, Pretty Cow*, and attractive as in *Twinkle, twinkle little star*, nevertheless suffers because they do not interpret the impressions of a

<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel Cotton turned to childhood in *Happiness*:

Go to the schoolboy, he shall preach  
What twenty winters cannot teach.

His didactic purpose is clear in *Slander*:

Childhood and youth engage my pen,  
'Tis labor lost to talk to men.

In his winning lines *To Some Children Listening to a Lark* ("See the lark prunes his active wings"), he asks,

Shall birds instructive lessons teach,  
And we be deaf to what they preach?  
No; ye dear nestlings of my heart!  
Go act the wiser songster's part.



child in terms of child thought and comprehension. "So far were they ruled by the customary requirement of their time, that they falsely endowed the juvenile mind with the power of correlating external beauty with its own virtuous possibilities."<sup>1</sup> Children from whom the sentiments of these poems are supposed to flow, reveal an unnatural power of discrimination that is not childlike. The quick response that Blake's *Songs of Innocence* still evoke from children, who normally consider all animals and flowers their friends, is, again, due to the poet's ability and willingness to take the emotional and thought life of the child for what it is, and to reverence it. Blake becomes again a child, writing as a child would if he had the power of poetic expression.

This intimate unity of created beings is expressed almost exclusively by merging the animal motive with the childhood theme. By bringing these two elements together in the development of universal benevolence, Thomson had started the tradition which led not only to Burns's natural magic in developing childhood themes in imagery drawn from bird life, but also to Lovibond's exaltation of the child in *Rural Sports*. Blake is the recipient of the same influences, and it is only by understanding the attitude of poets during the eighteenth century toward animals that Blake's lyrics can be read in true perspective. Animals are at the very center of his conception of life as expressed in his development of the childhood theme. Lovibond had already definitely held up the child as a model for parents; and Blake's fundamentally naturalistic conception in *Songs of Innocence* is in harmony with that part of Christianity which exalts the innocence and purity of the child heart:

<sup>1</sup> *Children's Books and Reading*, by Montrose J. Moses, New York, 1907.

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven.

In Blake's conception, children are in complete harmony with the spirit of benevolence that permeates the universe. Where in *Songs of Experience* and *Auguries of Innocence* he protests against man's sense-bound attitude, in the pure conception of *Songs of Innocence* he depicts childhood as it has never been portrayed again in English literature. Children enjoy the natural, unquestioning happiness of which man might partake if he could live like them in conformity with nature. The ideal state of happiness in which Blake's children live and move spontaneously, differentiates his poems from those of other poets. His images embody the dream of the eighteenth century; his animals and children illustrate the vision of natural goodness and universal benevolence. Blake's children and the animals with which they live in community of feeling and interests are not those of this world. On the other hand, Dora Quillinan's pet lamb is an animal of the pastures that every Lancashire peasant knows. *Fidelity* tells of a hound of terrestrial breed; and one always thinks of the poem in connection with Sir Walter Scott's *Helvellyn*. Cowper's hare and Burns's mouse are sentimentalized, but they are nevertheless of the type known from experience. In the eighteenth century there is a whole catalogue of freakish beasts, from Shenstone's playful kid that gamboled on the roof of the garden house, to Lovibond's farm-yard gathering, Cowper's Old Tiny, and Wordsworth's kitten toying with the falling leaves: all are conceived in terms of common experience. But Blake's children at play with animals

represent an ideal state that would exist if natural goodness and instinctive benevolence were facts.

If his songs have an Elizabethan freshness, it is because Blake had like the Elizabethans an eager, childlike enthusiasm that was inspired at the same time by the highest Christian teachings and naturalistic philosophy with regard to the child. If his ballad-like simplicity has greater charm than the halting verse of minor eighteenth-century poets, it means simply that he, like Burns, added lyric power. His lyrics are joyous as the theme he develops, because he sang with an Elizabethan spontaneity in the true spirit of ballad simplicity. *The Echoing Green* is of the eighteenth century in all but the joyous freshness of the exhilarating lines that sing themselves. The spontaneous quality of the poem must not obscure the fact that the side glance to bird life is not new, and that children sporting on the green have been observed often by poets before Blake.

The Sun does arise,  
And make happy the skies;  
The merry bells ring  
To welcome the Spring;  
The skylark and thrush,  
The birds of the bush,  
Sing louder around  
To the bells' cheerful sound,  
While our sports shall be seen  
On the Echoing Green.

The image of old folk sitting in the shade and recalling the days of their youth is not new.

Old John, with white hair,  
Does laugh away care,  
Sitting under the oak,  
Among the old folk.  
They laugh at our play,  
And soon they all say:



"Such, such were the joys  
When we all, girls and boys,  
In youth time were seen  
On the Echoing Green."

The image at the heart of the closing stanza, that of the mother bird and her brood, is not novel.

Till the little ones, weary,  
No more can be merry;  
The sun does descend,  
And our sports have an end.  
Round the laps of their mothers  
Many sisters and brothers,  
Like birds in their nest,  
Are ready for rest,  
And sport no more seen  
On the darkening Green.

The unaffected abandon to the child spirit is new. The play of children is that of natural children, and not sicklied over, as in Gray, by thought or sentiment, for Blake identifies himself with children and writes as from the heart of a child.

In *The Lamb*, he has again written wholly from the point of view of the child who asks the little lamb if it knows its maker.

Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?

The imagery is simple and convincing because it is conceived in the child spirit. A child's observation would focus on the "Softest clothing, woolly, bright," and on the "tender voice" of the lamb. In the second stanza the child answers the question with equal simplicity, but with a mystic insight into the unity which makes lamb and child one, an observation that is at the same time profound, and yet char-

acterized by just that simple penetrative power, unspoiled by experience, that is associated with childhood.

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:  
He is callèd by thy name,  
For He calls Himself a Lamb.  
He is meek, and He is mild;  
He became a little child.  
I a child, and thou a lamb,  
We are called by His name.

Blake does not conceive the child as reasoning out the problem; that would have led nowhere, and, anyway, would not have been true to child nature.<sup>1</sup> The child feels the unity, and states it like a child as a fact, directly and unquestioningly. It is here that Blake breaks with the didactic tradition. He does not reason, and he does not teach; instead he sings eternal mystic truths in the lightsome mood of childhood, before doubt has awakened the mind to make it gloomy. Childhood was sacred in the eyes of Blake because of this power, which is lost in man.

In *Night*, the child's thought is wholly absorbed in images from animal life. He is not thought of according to one standard, and birds according to another. He unquestioningly accepts his life as guarded by the same benevolent spirit which protects bird and beast. So delicately is the child attuned to this spirit that in *A Dream* an

<sup>1</sup> *Auguries of Innocence*:

The questioner, who sits so sly,  
Shall never know how to reply.

\*

The emmet's inch and eagle's mile  
Make lame Philosophy to smile.  
He who doubts from what he sees  
Will ne'er believe, do what you please.

emmet which has lost its way casts a shadow over the "angel-guarded bed" of a child asleep on the grass. In a dream the child heard the benighted and travel-worn emmet say:

'O, my children! do they cry?  
Do they hear their father sigh?  
Now they look abroad to see:  
Now return and weep for me.'

The child pitied the emmet, and "dropped a tear." But he was relieved to see a glow-worm, who replied to the emmet,

'What wailing wight  
Calls the watchman of the night?'

This is all delightful. The story has a happy ending, for the glow-worm sets the emmet on the track of the beetle.

Any child would joy to hear his mother read this dramatized episode from the night life of familiar insects. The animals act their part with simple dignity and restraint that does not obscure their kindness of heart. Sensitive natures had responded in the eighteenth century to the appeal for a consideration of the rights of animals; but Blake's vivid imagination carried him beyond their indignant reproaches and sentimental pleas into a vital dramatization of animal life in terms of the humanitarian spirit that had begun to pervade all classes of English people fifty years before the emmet and glow-worm conversed in the grass near a sleeping child. In the sentiment of the poem, and in the ballad form which harmonizes perfectly with the child spirit, Blake is in the direct line of Romantic development that led to the simple ballad of the naturalistic cottage girl whose inability to comprehend the sophisticated poet's insistence on the difference between life and death emphasizes the indestructible unity that underlies all creation.



There is a touch of whimsicality in *A Dream* which foreshadows definitely, for the first time in the eighteenth century, the attitude of Stevenson and Eugene Field. Children spontaneously rise with true feeling to the conception of the emmet who has lost his way in the dark and can not find his children. It is inconceivable that Watts or the ultra-serious Barbauld and Trimmer should have thought in terms of the glow-worm who asks what wailing wight calls the watchman, or still less of the injunction, which suggests the whimsical mood of *Wynken, Blynken, and Nod*,

'I am set to light the ground,  
While the beetle goes his round:  
Follow now the beetle's hum;  
Little wanderer, hie thee home.'

In this poem there is not so much as a suggestion of teaching; in fact, the child is not made to feel conscious of himself at all; his sentiment is merged with a situation that is perfectly normal to his conception of what may happen in natural life. A new force is felt here in children's poetry. It is the unaffected and untrammelled working of the poet's fancy. Where the imaginative approach would be too strong for the child's comprehension, the fancy of the poet, working in harmony with the child's mind processes, conceives a situation that appeals immediately because of its delicacy.

*On Another's Sorrow* shows a child who again bears witness to an instinctive universal benevolence that had been preached without Blake's fire by poets as far back as Thomson. Blake's child can not conceive of a state in which he could "see a falling tear" and not "seek for kind relief." The child interprets this benevolent spirit first in terms of the domestic life with which he is familiar, and then in terms of bird life.

Can a father see his child  
 Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?  
 Can a mother sit and hear  
 An infant groan, an infant fear?

\*

And can He who smiles on all  
 Hear the wren with sorrows small,  
 Hear the small bird's grief and care,  
 Hear the woes the infants bear,

And not sit beside the nest,  
 Pouring pity in their breast;  
 And not sit the cradle near,  
 Weeping tear on infant's tear;

\*

He doth give His joy to all;  
 He becomes an infant small.

Here the conception is closer to Christianity, and there is also a faint suggestion of teaching the child, although the child is speaking.

In *Songs of Innocence* the opposites of those poems which treat the same subjects in a mood of protest in *Songs of Experience* are pervaded by the spirit of benevolence. In these the poet is closer to the outward events of life. *Holy Thursday* is one of the group which reflect actual experience, or at least approach it. It is connected with that century-old institution, the annual charity sermon, which was preached on a stated day, and which charity children attended in a body. They were garbed in the distinctive dress of their schools, each group distinguished by a certain color.<sup>1</sup> *Holy Thursday* is one of the earliest of the group, the first draft being included in the manuscript known as

<sup>1</sup> Compare the dress of Lamb and Coleridge while pupils at Christ's Hospital.

*An Island in the Moon*.<sup>1</sup> The background associates the poem with St. Paul's in London. Blake has developed the charity motive more vividly than Thomson, who had also noticed the happy songs of institutional children. Blake pleads with men not to look unsympathetically upon this throng of innocent children, and has enriched the poem by images from nature. The deep love and humanity which pervade the poignant lines in *The Little Black Boy* are here also appealingly phrased in connection with the multitudes of children who enter St. Paul's.

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,  
The children walking two and two, in red and blue and green,  
Grey-headed beadies walked before, with wands as white as snow,  
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames' waters flow.

O what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!  
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.  
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,  
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to Heaven the voice of song,  
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among.  
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;  
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

The poem reveals Blake's ability to take a subject from common life and to depict it in lines that are definite and concrete. He has localized his subject and given it firmer outlines than can be found in the most typical *Songs of Innocence*. In this near approach to physical reality he has not refrained from applying the moral in the last line.

The sorrows of the little chimney-sweepers are conceived sentimentally by depicting the pathetic joy which the misused creatures draw from a mere dream. It is not ac-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John Sampson, op. cit., page liv: "1784 circa, Writes *An Island in the Moon*, containing earliest of *Songs of Innocence*."



cidental that Blake was drawn to these children of soot and smoke. It is an historical fact that these boys often had a fire lighted under them to force them to climb into a chimney which they feared.<sup>1</sup> Blake does not intrude sophisticated notions of grown-ups, except possibly in the last line, but allows the child, in his own simple language, to arouse humanitarian sympathy without a direct appeal for it. Like Southey fifteen years later in *The Battle of Blenheim*, Blake has written in the main with artistic detachment and objectivity that make a powerful appeal because the terrible conditions which worked injustice on helpless children are imaginatively realized. His phrasing of the pathetic ray of hope for happiness in their work is more convincing than many lines of moralizing or preachment.

When my mother died I was very young,  
And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
Could scarcely cry "'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!'"  
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,  
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved: so I said  
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare  
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet, and that very night,  
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!—  
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,  
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,  
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;  
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,  
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

<sup>1</sup> "drove him up the chimney with blows, pin proddings, and even with the lighting of a fire beneath his feet." O. Jocelyn Dunlop: *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour*, p. 271, 1912, London.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,  
They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;  
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,  
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,  
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.  
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;  
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

In *Songs of Experience* and *Auguries of Innocence*, Blake is in the direct line of development from Shaftesbury and Thomson, and, moreover, shows the more daring phrasings of the Revolutionary period in which he lived. Except for the group of poems in which he is close to grimly real suffering and misfortune that are developed in their humanitarian aspects, so that he is tempted like the moral writers to suggest a moral for the benefit of children, *Songs of Innocence* reveals the purest form of the poets' dream of a happy state of childhood. More successfully than other poets of the century he has refrained from moralizing childhood.

After all, the true secret of Blake's success lies in his reverence for childhood in all its manifestations.<sup>1</sup> He did not kneel before it in the same sense as Wordsworth, who deified the child by imaginatively exalting it in the *Ode*. Neither did Blake look upon the child in the spirit of Eugene Field's *Little Boy Blue*, where the parents behold in the rusty tin soldiers, standing in the array in which their child left them, an altar at which to worship the mystery

<sup>1</sup> Langhorne's *Enlargement of the Mind* (Epistle II, 1765) answers the question,

But why should life, so short by Heaven ordained,  
Be long to thoughtless infancy restrained . . . ?

\*

O blind to truth! to Nature's wisdom blind!

of life. With Blake it is the frank acceptance and faithful realization of the child's sense of wonder and mystery, in such poems as *The Little Girl Lost* and *The Little Girl Found* (*Songs of Experience*), that causes children to recognize in their elders a community of feeling which breeds a quick response because of equality and identity of interest. Blake's child spirit is revealed better than anywhere else in that mystical sense which in less simple and human form dominated and motivated his later work not connected with childhood. His elemental frankness and true ballad objectivity made it possible for him to feel and write like one of his poetic children. The sentiment of Blake never becomes sentimental or forced, for the reason that it is characterized by true simplicity of child sentiment. Like the nurse in *Nurse's Song*, he is one of the group. There is no herding into the fold as in Dorothy Wordsworth's poem; instead it is "let us away." The children answer,

"No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,  
And we cannot go to sleep;  
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,  
And the hills are all covered with sheep."

Then follows a spontaneous acquiescence, for children must not be thwarted in their natural desires:

"Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,  
And then go home to bed."  
The little ones leaped and shouted and laughed  
And all the hills echoed.

At last, then, in spite of tradition that would place fetters on children, in place of brimstone-and-fire threats, and in the face of moral strictures and forbiddings, the child is free and can sing in the *Laughing Song*,



When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,  
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;  
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,  
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,  
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,  
When Mary and Susan and Emily  
With their sweet round mouths sing, "Ha, Ha, He!"

When painted birds laugh in the shade,  
When our table with cherries and nuts is spread,  
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,  
To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha, Ha, He!"

Blake's achievement of placing the child on a plane where his desires and impulses are recognized as facts to be unhesitatingly accepted in place of being repressed or made over into something else, entitles him to the position of pioneer poet in the modern sense of poetry about children, where the ideal is that oneness with nature is the "glory of Childhood".

The Christian terminology which Blake took over in his poems is not out of harmony with his essentially naturalistic conception of childhood. Unless he had coined an entirely new vocabulary, which would have militated against clearness, as it does where he has invented fantastic phrases in his later poems,<sup>1</sup> he could not well avoid using such terms as "Shepherd," "Lamb," "God," "Angel," "Heaven," "Father," "Maker," which were ready at hand, but to which he did not always attach the traditional theological conceptions. Blake's children speak of their maker as of a friend. There is no suggestion in the child lyrics of an external God; they are not conscious of an anthropomorphic, absolute

<sup>1</sup> Compare "Oothoon," "Golgonooza," "Bowlahoola," "Ololon."

monarch who rules heaven and earth as in the Miltonic conception; there is no supernatural being whom they must fear as in the economy of Watts. When Blake's intention is most evident, as in *The Shepherd*, the child interprets his observations without being disturbed by the thought of anything but the shepherd in the fields with his ewes and lambs. In *The Lamb* the child in the same mood spontaneously identifies himself with animals, who are then at once identified with God. Far from being blasphemy, this is in the naturalistic conception the highest compliment the child is capable of paying its maker. The sense of fellowship, and the untutored acceptance of God as one of its own kind, which are expressed in all of the child's songs with unaffected naturalness that suggests no outside interference, are signs of inborn reverence. According to the naturalistic view, the greatest token of respect is the child's acceptance of its elders as equals.

In *The Voice of the Devil*, Blake outlines his conviction that all bibles and sacred codes have been the cause of the erroneous belief that man has "two real existing principles, viz., a Body and a Soul," and that "Energy, called Evil, is alone from the Body," and that "God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies." Blake holds the following contraries to be true; "that man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that called Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul," and that "Energy is the only life, and is from the Body . . . Energy is Eternal Delight." There is nothing devilish, therefore, in following natural energy and desire. Blake condemns Milton, for instance, for fettering his angels and giving liberty of action to devils. The truer conception would have been, in his estimation, to recognize

natural desire, which can be restrained and made passive only in those who are weak enough to be restrained; but to be weak is to be without energy; that is, without life. When Blake wished to reawaken men to his belief, he held up the child. Although he recognizes the disturbing influence of man in *Songs of Experience*, he had written into the *Songs of Innocence* his vision of the unrestrained physical delight of innocent children, who manifest a soul life unspoiled and not made self-conscious by institutional interference.<sup>1</sup>

Blake's historical position near the close of a development that had taken place for nearly three quarters of a century made it possible for his exuberant spirit to find a positive outlet after the ground had been cleared by poets during the decades before 1789. In place of talking about the child or to it, Blake is at one with the child. "Blake carried himself back into the days of childhood, when all was joy and innocence, and when the new-born soul felt no other emotions but life and the joy of living."<sup>2</sup> If man

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Motto to the Songs of Innocence and of Experience*:

The Good are attracted by men's perceptions,  
And think not for themselves;  
Till Experience teaches them to catch  
And to cage the fairies and elves.

(Rossetti MS.)

Compare also *Infant Sorrow*:

I beheld the Priest by day,  
Where beneath my vines he lay,  
Like a serpent in the day  
Underneath my vines he lay.

(Rossetti MS.)

<sup>2</sup> *William Blake, Poet and Mystic*, by P. Berger, translated by Daniel H. Conner, Chapman and Hall, London, 1914, p. 286.



would but be natural, his happiness would be as unquestioning as that of the child in *Infant Joy*:

"I have no name:  
I am but two days old."  
What shall I call thee?  
"I happy am,  
Joy is my name."  
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty Joy!  
Sweet Joy, but two days old.  
Sweet Joy I call thee:  
Thou dost smile,  
I sing the while,  
Sweet joy befall thee!

This is pagan in its headlong abandon to the joy of living. For the ideal of the institutional child the poet has substituted the naturalistic delights of a child who in natural goodness has inherited happiness because he is living unquestioningly in harmony with the spirit of love that would visibly pervade the world if man did not interfere. Blake had the fullest vision of universal benevolence that wishes happiness for all men; but to be happy they must be again like children—innocent, gladsome, and acknowledge no restraint from without.

Professor Irving Babbitt may inveigh against the evils which he sees growing out of such a naturalistic abandon to the god Whirl as Blake has reflected in *Infant Joy*, *Laughing Song*, and *Spring*. However, those forces of benevolence which had been at work since Shaftesbury, and which had gradually modified the attitude of poets toward children, reached in Blake's *Songs of Innocence* their highest literary expression in the exaltation of mani-

festations of instinctive goodness and universal benevolence which recognize fellowship with animals. In his protest against what he considered unjust outside control, from which children had for ages suffered at the hands of man, Blake could hardly have depicted the naturalistic conception more unqualifiedly than in *Spring*. The effusiveness of the child in this poem shows the extreme recoil from the decorum of the institutional ideal.

Little boy,  
Full of joy;  
Little girl,  
Sweet and small;  
Cock does crow,  
So do you;  
Merry voice,  
Infant noise,

Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.

Little lamb,  
Here I am;  
Come and lick  
My white neck;  
Let me pull  
Your soft wool;  
Let me kiss  
Your soft face:

Merrily, merrily, we welcome in the year.

This is a romantic child. If energy, as Blake held, is the manifestation of soul, this child is richly endowed. Unlike the type he supersedes, Blake's child, it is obvious, has great capacity for feeling, but not for thought, because no restraining forces are recognized. Judgment is romantically subordinated to feeling, which is held to be naturally good. Certainly, Blake's child in *Spring* has no inklings of

the restrictive conscience for which Shaftesbury substituted expansive emotion. Spontaneity is completely realized. Beyond this the poets who follow Shaftesbury can not go in their portrayal of children who wholeheartedly respond to impulses. The child is no longer a rational being, but a spontaneous creature that impulsively follows natural instincts.



## CHAPTER VII

### WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

More than any other eminent English man of letters, Wordsworth is the poet of childhood. His poetry depicts the moods and activities of children more extensively than verse prior to his. His heart was attuned to childhood in all its manifestations. Yet he did not write for children. Wordsworth's classification of his poems, mystifying in other respects, indicates clearly that he did not attempt a body of verse for children. Nevertheless, with affectionate and loving attention to detail he has noticed them from nursery days to school time. His poems contain a gallery of individual portraits, especially of subjects from the humbler walks of life, in London as well as in the Lake District and the southwestern counties of England.

Although Wordsworth extended the boundaries of poetry to include all phases of childhood, his treatment is in harmony with that of poets from Prior to Crabbe. His poetry, with that of Blake, represents the fine flowering of the eighteenth-century attitude toward childhood.<sup>1</sup> There are, for instance, manifest suggestions of harmony between his lines on native fields and those that have been noted from Akenside to Southey. Sometimes, also, he echoes the very words of eighteenth-century poets, as in the third book of *The Prelude*, where his lines on the habits of youths at Cambridge University recall Tickell's passage on student life at Oxford,

<sup>1</sup> Until a careful study of Wordsworth's sources has been made in the light of eighteenth-century influences, his poetic method can not be fully understood.

Where the Black Edward passed his beardless youth.<sup>1</sup>

Although Blake and Wordsworth alike felt the strong urge of influences at work in the eighteenth century, there is between them a difference of emphasis in the treatment of childhood. Both poets are fervent and warm in conception and expression. Yet, except possibly for a poem like the *Ode*, the body of Wordsworth's poetry about childhood reveals a saner treatment. Wordsworth remarked of the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*: "There is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott." Nevertheless, Wordsworth held closer than Blake to com-

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Tickell's on *Queen Caroline's rebuilding the lodgings of the Black Prince and Henry V. at Queen's College, Oxford*:

In that coarse age were princes fond to dwell  
With meagre monks, and haunt the silent cell.  
Sent from the Monarch's to the Muses' court,  
Their meals were frugal, and their sleeps were short;  
To couch at curfew time they thought no scorn,  
And froze at matins every winter morn;  
They read on early book the starry frame,  
And lisped each constellation by its name;  
Art after art still dawning to their view,  
And their mind opening as their stature grew.

In addressing his *alma mater*, Wordsworth contrasts the luxury-loving youths of his day with the abstemious "nurslings" who submitted to academic discipline "from their first childhood,"

When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped  
And crowded, o'er the ponderous books they hung  
Like caterpillars eating out their way  
In silence, or with keen devouring noise  
Not to be tracked or fathered. Princes then  
At matins froze, and couched at curfew-time,  
Trained up through piety and zeal to prize  
Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds.

mon experience; the reader feels that he is in the presence of real children. The difference is due, in part at least, to poetic method. Wordsworth preferred to write, not like the earlier master during the spontaneous overflow of emotion, but in his favorite tranquil mood of recollected emotion. Unlike Blake, and much more like Sir Walter Scott, though in a different mood, he loved to localize his affections. His geographical sense, which led to the choice of definite backgrounds in most instances, kept him in the company of children of flesh and blood.

His deep sense of moral responsibility served to emphasize this trait of stern fidelity to outward fact. Blake's preternaturally bright and vivid backgrounds can seldom be localized. Blake asked for his visions of delight no merely terrestrial location. In Wordsworth, however, the geography of the background against which he observed children is as a rule clear and definite. Blake's *Echoing Green* will never be identified, because it incorporates the essential delights of children at play on any English village green. To localize it, as one loves to do with Wordsworth's poems, would be out of keeping with Blake's vision of universal delight for children at play out of doors. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth individualizes and identifies the Bowling Green on the hillside above Lake Windermere, because his vision of happiness and contentment is affectionately associated with specific localities. His local feeling is strong. His mood demands, like Michael's at the unfinished sheep-fold, an object in nature with which to associate emotional experience. Wordsworth is seldom concerned merely with airy fancies; he usually gives them a local habitation and a name. He gains in realism because he conveys the impression of writing with his eye on the individual child and his experiences.



Like Blake, Wordsworth found in the child unspoiled by man the most satisfying illustration of the simple life. He too would rejuvenate society by way of the child. But less radical than Blake, he did not wish to do away with institutions that militate against happiness, but instead to reform them by modifications which he considered practical.) His expressed wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing, prompted him to write expository passages on the need of reform. As a result the humanitarian and ethical aspects are more obvious than in Blake. Wordsworth's preoccupation with childhood led him not only to a statement of moods which are the essence of universal childhood, as in the *Ode*, or *We Are Seven*, but also to a consideration of the practical problems of education, as in *The Prelude*, and the reform of industrial abuses, as in *The Excursion*.

## I

The extent and depth of his interest in the varying manifestations of childhood are reflected in his notice of children under many circumstances and moods from birth to death, in the home or near it, in the fields and beside streams, in school or on the way to and from it. Unlike his predecessors, he observes children with equal variety and interest in the city as well as in the country. It is true that his somewhat rigid nature could not unbend sufficiently to make him the care-free companion of children—in the *Anecdote for Fathers* he appears awkward and external—but he nevertheless reveals a consistent deep interest in them, and certainly never fails to notice them. Although he could not sport with them, he evinces an affection that prompted and lay at the heart of his philosophy of life, and conditioned his poetic expression of it. If he was not able to abandon himself to them in their lightsome moods,

he yet honored the man who like the Wanderer in *The Excursion* loved to have children about him:

The rough sports  
And teasing ways of children vexed not him.  
(I, 415-416).

Michael tells his son that they had been playmates among the hills, so that Luke did not

Lack any pleasure which a boy can know.

When Wordsworth expressed the anxiety he felt for England, he unaffectedly closed his sonnet by emphasizing affection for his country in an image of the child whose devotion is whole-hearted and unquestioning.<sup>1</sup> In his most inspired lines, as well as in those which show him doggedly but vainly attempting to practice the theory of his *Preface*, Wordsworth is never far from contemplation of the simple thoughts and emotions of children.

As a schoolboy at Hawkeshead he had observed children with a discriminating eye. When he returned during the summer vacation after his first year at Cambridge, he noticed that a change had come over children of those "Whose occupation I really loved." It was a change like that wrought by an eight-days' absence from a garden in spring:

pale-faced babes whom I had left  
In arms, now rosy prattlers at the feet  
Of a pleased grandame tottering up and down;  
And growing girls whose beauty, filched away  
With all its pleasant promises, was gone  
To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*, XVII.

<sup>2</sup> *The Prelude* (IV, 203-208).—Grandchildren are not frequently mentioned during the century before Wordsworth. He notices them again in *Descriptive Sketches* (l. 152), *Anticipation*, and in *The Westmoreland Girl (To My Grandchildren)*. Burns has suggestive lines in *New Year's Day* and *Second Epistle to Davie*.

Unlike the bachelor poets of the eighteenth century (in *Lines on a Sleeping Infant* Cowper takes refuge in generalities), he enjoyed the inestimable advantage of children in his own household, and also the benefit of Dorothy's "seeing" eyes.<sup>1</sup> One of her letters to Lady Beaumont indicates that his delicate observation of traits that make for subtle characterization even in infants was stimulated probably by Dorothy's sympathetic observation of children: "Catherine is the only funny child in the family; the rest of the children are *lively*, but Catherine is comical in every look and motion. Thomas perpetually forces a tender smile by his simplicity, but Catherine makes you laugh outright, though she can hardly say a dozen words, and she joins in the laugh, as if sensible of the drollery of her appearance."

In its reflection of the fleeting moods of an individual child, *Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old* (1811) definitely marks Wordsworth as a precursor of the modern attitude, which tries to shadow forth in poetry such evanescent moods as Wordsworth recorded in his own way by reference to the beauty of nature. He observes the child when it is alone, and when it plays in the presence of admiring friends or relatives.

Loving she is, and tractable, though wild;  
And Innocence hath privilege in her  
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes;  
And feats of cunning; and the pretty round  
Of trespasses, affected to provoke  
Mock-chastisement and partnership in play.  
And, as a faggot sparkles on the hearth,  
Not less if unattended and alone  
Than when both young and old sit gathered round  
And take delight in its activity;

<sup>1</sup> *The Prelude*, XIV, 232ff.



Even so this happy Creature of herself  
Is all-sufficient; solitude to her  
Is blithe society, who fills the air  
With gladness and involuntary songs.  
Light are her sallies as the tripping fawn's  
Forth-startled from the fern where she lay couched;  
Unthought-of, unexpected, as the stir  
Of the soft breezes ruffling the meadow-flowers,  
Or from before it chasing wantonly  
The many-coloured images imprest  
Upon the bosom of a placid lake.

Dorothy has adapted herself exquisitely to the child's point of view in the *Address to a Child During a Boisterous Winter Evening* (1806). Without a suggestion of teaching, the lines picture Dorothy and the child by the winter-evening fireside. The fireside matter has here been developed with delicate attention to the thought life and emotional reactions of an individual child. He is no longer, as before Burns, merely present, but his interest in the phenomena of a winter storm determines the choice of imagery.

Hark! over the roof he makes a pause,  
And growls as if he would fix his claws  
Right in the slates, and with a huge rattle  
Drive them down, like men in battle:  
—But let him range round; he does us no harm,  
We build up the fire, we're snug and warm;  
Untouched by his breath see the candle shines bright,  
And burns with a clear and steady light;  
Books have we to read,—but that half-stifed knell,  
Alas! 'tis the sound of the eight o'clock bell.  
—Come now we'll to bed! and when we are there  
He may work his own will, and what shall we care?  
He may knock at the door,—we'll not let him in;  
May drive at the windows,—we'll laugh at his din;  
Let him seek his own home wherever it be;  
Here's a *cozie* warm house for Edward and me.

There is a suggestion of humor in the story of the migration of the poor priest from Northumberland to the Lakes. In their old age the priest and his wife never tired of recounting their experiences on the road. The motley train of horses with jingling bells and panniers, and the ass which carried their children, excited the curiosity of many a village Dogberry and "staid guardian of the public peace." Wordsworth singles out the priest's children (*The Excursion*, VII, 72-76):

Rocked by the motion of a trusty ass  
Two ruddy children hung, a well-poised freight,  
Each in a basket nodding drowsily;  
Their bonnets, I remember, wreathed with flowers,  
Which told it was the pleasant month of June.

On the basis of his poetry it would be possible to reconstruct the life of a young child from the moment of its birth. He does not relegate children to a similitude, but in all his poems reveals a personal interest. The infant at the moment of its birth is interesting to the poet who has brooded on the destiny of man. He carries on the eighteenth-century desire for children in the home, as in *The Warning* (1833), where the humble cottage is

blest  
With a new visitant, an infant guest.

The lines *To the Reverend Dr. Wordsworth* (1820) contain charming glimpses of the age-old custom of minstrels who played their Christmas tunes under cottage windows, a custom not noted in connection with childhood by poets during the century before Wordsworth. At such times unbidden tears rise

For names once heard, and heard no more;  
Tears brightened by the serenade  
For infant in the cradle laid.

In *The Excursion* (V, 278) he notices the infant at time of baptism, "a day of solemn ceremonial," the infant being

For this occasion daintily adorned,  
At the baptismal font,

where the consecrating element cleanses "the original stain" and "corrupt affections," and where,

high as the thought of man  
Can carry virtue, virtue is professed.  
(V, 287-288)

His sonnet *Baptism* (1827) likewise indicates that Wordsworth did not follow literally the doctrine of natural goodness. In addition to the ceremony itself he notices the circle of family and friends at the font, the infant being, meanwhile, not overlooked.

In his lines *To the Moon* (1835) he gives a charming glimpse of the gestures of an infant attracted by the moon, whose powers

are charms  
That fascinate the very Babe in arms,  
While he, uplifted towards thee, laughs outright,  
Spreading his little palms in his glad Mother's sight.

Dorothy's *The Cottager to her Infant* (1805), "suggested to her while beside my sleeping children," is a homely lullaby not at all conceived in the traditional manner. Details of the cottage are those which would naturally attract an infant. The song, which seems to be spontaneously suggested while the mother is singing to her babe, gives a realistic air of improvisation.

The days are cold, the nights are long,  
The north-wind sings a doleful song;  
Then hush again upon my breast;  
All merry things are now at rest,  
Save thee, my pretty Love!



The kitten sleeps upon the hearth,  
 The crickets long have ceased their mirth;  
 There's nothing stirring in the house  
 Save one *wee*, hungry, nibbling mouse,  
 Then why so busy thou?

Nay! start not at that sparkling light;  
 'Tis but the moon that shines so bright  
 On the window pane bedropped with rain:  
 Then, little Darling! sleep again,  
 And wake when it is day.

Lullabies are rare in the century from Prior to Wordsworth, probably because it was the age of reason and enlightenment; and the strength of the dissenting element, which would not be in sympathy with the beautiful conception of the Virgin and Child, militated against a spontaneous lyrical phrasing of lullabies conceived in the medieval tradition. Watts's lullaby is essentially Puritanical. It is not until Coleridge's *The Virgin's Cradle Hymn*, which he translated from a Latin hymn "copied from a print of the Virgin, in a Roman Catholic village in Germany," that the tender mother spirit of the medieval lullabies finds recognition among Romantic poets.<sup>1</sup> Although Blake combines naturalistic thought and Christian phrasing in his lullabies, he was too much out of sympathy with the Church to enter into the spirit of the Cradle Hymns of the Virgin. How far removed even the transcendental Coleridge was from the traditional spirit of the Virgin and Child is patent in his *Christmas Carol* ("The shepherds went their hasty way"), which Bullen justly criticizes for ineptness of phrasing. Dorothy Wordsworth has altogether left the tradition-

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Warton's *On Sir Joshua Reynolds' Painted Window* (at New College, Oxford), 1782, has the lines:

Heaven's golden emanation, gleaming mild  
 O'er the mean cradle of the Virgin's Child.

al element in order to sing in the mood of a cottage mother who, in crooning over her babe, weaves in the commonest facts of household observation. The two additional stanzas, composed by Wordsworth, clearly mark the lullaby as a north of England mother's song.

Coleridge's *A Child's Evening Prayer*, written for children, gives simple expression to sentiments which a child would voice in prayer for members of the household. In Wordsworth's *Guilt and Sorrow* the unfortunate woman begins the story of her life by recollections of her pious father, who taught her in earliest childhood to repeat her evening prayers:

And I believe that, soon as I began  
To lisp, he made me kneel beside my bed,  
And in his hearing there my prayers I said.

Three poems associated with Dora Wordsworth give intimate glimpses of the poet and his daughter. They reveal an essentially modern attitude in the poet's willingness to note an individual child, from the manifestations of whose interest he catches spiritual gleams that cheer and ennoble the parent who sees in his child the hope of the future.<sup>1</sup>

One of the nearest approaches he has made to the spontaneous lightsome joy of children in activity is found in *The Kitten and Falling Leaves* (1804). In spite of its length and the poet's tendency, toward the close, to moralize and forget the infant in thoughts of his own wishes for happiness, the poem is a "pretty baby-treat." Under the elder-bush in the cottage garden, "little Tabby" works "Like an Indian conjuror" for the amusement of the poet and his infant:

<sup>1</sup> Compare the attitude of Coleridge toward his infant son Hartley in *Frost at Midnight*.

That way look, my Infant, lo!  
What a pretty baby-show!  
See the Kitten on the wall,  
Sporting with the leaves that fall,  
Withered leaves—one—two—and three—  
From the lofty elder-tree!  
Through the calm and frosty air  
Of this morning bright and fair,  
Eddying round and round they sink  
Softly, slowly: one might think,  
From the motions that are made,  
Every little leaf conveyed  
Sylph or Faery hither tending,—  
To this lower world descending,  
Each invisible and mute,  
In his wavering parachute.  
—But the Kitten, how she starts,  
Crouches, stretches, paws, and darts!  
First at one, and then its fellow,  
Just as light and just as yellow;  
There are many now—now one—  
Now they stop and there are none:  
What intenseness of desire  
In her upward eye of fire!  
With a tiger-leap half-way  
Now she meets the coming prey,  
Lets it go as fast, and then  
Has it in her power again. . . .

His *Address to my Infant Daughter, Dora* (on being reminded that she was a month old that day, September 16, 1804) shows how totally the attitude toward children in this type of poem had changed in one hundred years. Prior's courtly lines to a child of quality were written exactly a century earlier. In Wordsworth's parental eyes the infant is a "mild offspring of infirm humanity," and a "frail, feeble monthling." These phrases indicate the poet's willingness to face a fact that does not necessarily embellish the subject.



In his thoughts the child is but one tiny manifestation of the vast forces of the universe. In the contemplation, moreover, of what she would have been had she been born an Indian child, he is carried far from Prior's charming make-believe. The passages in which he observes the nascent smiles of the infant are permeated with that spirit of consecration which is associated with Wordsworth's attitude toward nature in such a poem as *Tintern Abbey*. The infant's smiles are "feelers of love," tokens and signs, which,

when the appointed season hath arrived,  
Joy, as her holiest language, shall adopt.

Like classicist poets he looks beyond the child into the future; but his forward look is more accurately described as vision—that feeling after an elusive something which baffles expression. The urbane perspicuity which satisfied the readers of Prior's day has given place to vague, tantalizing emotion. The tokens and signs of this emotion bring spiritual assurances with which writers on childhood had not busied themselves since the days of Earle and Vaughan.

In the appealing lines to his favorite daughter Dora ("A little onward lend thy guiding hand," 1816), Wordsworth recalls how he had carried her

A tottering infant, with compliant stoop  
From flower to flower supported.

Now he is her companion still,

but to curb  
Thy nymph-like step swift-bounding o'er the lawn,  
Along loose rocks, or the slippery verge  
Of foaming torrents.

Dora is her father's companion in his early-morning walk; they climb together to the top of "some smooth ridge" to

feel the exhilaration of height and distance. He would be her guide through woods and forest

to behold  
There how the Original of human art,  
Heaven-prompted Nature, measures and erects  
Her temples. . . .

He reviewed the classical authors with her, and scaled "to heights more glorious still" of Holy Writ,

where this Darling of my care,  
Advancing with me hand in hand, may learn,  
Without forsaking a too earnest world,  
To calm the affections, elevate the soul,  
And consecrate her life to truth and love.

Poets from Thomson to the end of the century had given many glimpses of the loving care of parents for their children. Yet none is so winning as this in the sincere manifestation of the heart-felt companionship existing between Wordsworth and his daughter Dora (she was in temperament a second Dorothy), in whom he found support in his old age after he had been deprived of Dorothy's companionship by the clouding of her mind.

Wordsworth's insistence on freedom for children, and their natural right to enjoyment of it in undisturbed, unsupervised communion with nature, is winningly expressed in one of the most appealing of the Duddon sonnets. He observed cottage children at play far from the contamination of cities. There is no suggestion of pastoralties; Wordsworth had observed these children; and that he wrote with his eye on the object is clear from the fact that the cottage near which the children tumbled has been identified. They are the companions of the solitude-loving Duddon, near whose banks stood the cottage "rude and grey"

Whose ruddy children, by the mother's eyes  
Carelessly watched, sport through the summer day,  
Thy pleased associates:—light as endless May  
On infant bosoms lonely Nature lies. (V)

The natural attraction which running water has for children is reflected by the Romanticist poets, who were themselves ever striving to live over again the care-free days of childhood. Wordsworth is like them in this love for streams and brooks, and when he wishes to correct despondency in *The Excursion*, he points to the simple cottage-boy who is wholly absorbed in play at a mill-dam.

“May I name  
Without offence, that fair-faced cottage-boy?  
Dame Nature's pupil of the lowest form,  
Youngest apprentice in the school of art!  
Him, as we entered from the open glen,  
You might have noticed, busily engaged,  
Heart, soul, and hands,—in mending the defects  
Left in the fabric of a leaky dam  
Raised for enabling this penurious stream  
To turn a slender mill (that new-made plaything)  
For his delight—the happiest he of all!”

(III, 196-206)

In their endeavor to win man back to a simple life, poets instinctively held up the child as an ideal example of simple, if not divine, contentment. Wordsworth's wide observation of children in the Lake District provided him with a rich fund of experience. He never ceased to draw upon this in order to give point to the plea that, he intended, should win men by the contemplation of innocent childhood which spontaneously found its richest enjoyments in the presence of nature. So the group which had been observing the boy are led to thoughts of the divine happiness for which poets of the eighteenth century had longed.



"Far happiest," answered the desponding Man,  
 "If, such as he now is, he might remain!  
 Ah! what avails imagination high  
 Or question deep?" (III, 207-210)

Wordsworth is ever thinking of the problem of the soul life of man. Like Blake he believes that all the sophistications and reasonings of man will lead man nowhere. In his poetry generally, as in the *Ode*, he is satisfied to rest in childhood, because there the sense of unity has not been disturbed by the interposition of reason.

The Other, not displeased,  
 Promptly replied—"My notion is the same.  
 And I, without reluctance, could decline  
 All act of inquisition whence we rise,  
 And what, when breath hath ceased, we may become.  
 Here are we, in a bright and breathing world.  
 Our origin, what matters it?"<sup>1</sup> (III, 233-238)

No other poet has so widely and sympathetically observed children in communion with the external nature poets had exalted from the time of Thomson. Nature and the boy led the group to thoughts of "natural piety"; and it was Wordsworth's belief that children were happiest and most effectively taught in the presence of nature.<sup>2</sup>

Although he preferred to write of children in rural surroundings, Wordsworth, nevertheless, more fully than any poet of the eighteenth century, has observed children in crowded surroundings of the metropolis.

<sup>1</sup> "Wisdom doth live with children round her knees" (*Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*, IV).

<sup>2</sup> This is likewise the attitude of Coleridge. In *Frost at Midnight* the "philosopher" father contemplates in rosy dreams the boyhood days of Hartley, who is to receive spiritual suggestions from his companionship with external nature.

He often visited London, but was not, any more than the benevolist poets, in sympathy with city life. In the city he pined a discontented sojourner. He refers peevishly to the shrill cries of London streets. Favorite phrases are "this noisy world," "monstrous ant-hill," "barricadoed evermore within the walls of cities," and "mean shapes on every side." He was offended by the environment to which children were exposed. Referring to the ingenuous moments of his youth when his outlook on life was very simple, he tells in *The Prelude* of the child placed in the middle of a table surrounded by men and women gathered there by chance. After describing the child's beauty in unsurpassed lines, he fears for its future. As the poet muses over the experience, he thinks that perhaps the child has grown to an age when he can look with envy on the babe who sleeps undisturbed beside a mountain chapel—the image chosen to express his preference for rural innocence and purity.

foremost of the scenes,  
Which yet survive in memory, appears  
One, at whose center sate a lovely Boy,  
A sportive infant, who, for six months' space,  
Not more, had been of age to deal about  
Articulate prattle—Child as beautiful  
As ever clung around a mother's neck,  
Or father fondly gazed upon with pride.

\*

The Boy had been  
The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on  
In whatsoever place, but seemed in this  
A sort of alien scattered from the clouds.  
A lusty vigour, more than infantine  
He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose  
Just three parts blown—a cottage child—if e'er,  
By cottage-door on breezy mountain-side,  
Or in some sheltering vale, was seen a babe  
By Nature's gift so favoured. Upon a board

Decked with refreshments had this child been placed,  
*His* little stage in the vast theatre,  
 And there he sate surrounded with a throng  
 Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men  
 And shameless women, treated and caressed;  
 Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,  
 While oaths and laughter and indecent speech  
 Were rife about him as the songs of birds  
 Contending after showers. The mother now  
 Is fading out of memory, but I see  
 The lovely Boy as I beheld him then  
 Among the wretched and the falsely gay,  
 Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged  
 Amid the fiery furnace. (VII, 334-370)

His glimpses of child life in London indicate clearly that, if he did not always look with approval, he did look intently. His attitude toward London during his first youthful visit is charmingly described in a beautiful image from child life. Although he saw vulgar men, and observed houses, pavements, streets, and degraded forms on all sides, he was not satisfied with externalities, but

a simple look  
 Of child-like inquisition now and then  
 Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect  
 Some inner meanings which might harbour there.

(*Prelude*, VIII, 535-538)

Wordsworth's deep affection for children, and his sympathy with the natural love of parents for their children, are reflected in a reminiscence of his first sojourn in London. The passage again reveals his ability to strike off a picture of city life, and is in its place among lines on city children as memorable as the sonnet composed on Westminster Bridge, which reveals the poet of mountain and lakes giving final phrasing to a mood characteristic of a great city. He had observed a father, an artificer, who sat on a stone near an iron paling that enclosed a grass-plot.



there, in silence, sate

This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched  
 Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought  
 For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.  
 Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,  
 He took no heed; but in his brawny arms  
 (The Artificer was to the elbow bare,  
 And from his work this moment had been stolen)  
 He held the child, and, bending over it,  
 As if he were afraid both of the sun  
 And of the air, which he had come to seek,  
 Eyed the poor babe with love unutterable.

He writes from the point of view of the countryman who pities city folk because of their lack of fresh air and freedom, and notes the father's timid gestures that would shield the child from sun and breeze, to which Wordsworth had been accustomed from early childhood. The poet's heart was moved; like Thomson he felt for suffering childhood everywhere, but unlike him was able to visualize concretely whatever his sympathetic heart led him to observe. It is characteristic of his wide interest in children that he should have noticed among the "fermenting mass of human-kind" in London this detail of the father with his sickly child.

In *Power of Music* (1806) the street fiddler holds men, women, and children spellbound.

That errand-bound 'Prentice was passing in haste—  
 What matter! he's caught—and his time runs to waste.

The fiddler wins coins from old and young,

and there!

The one-pennied Boy has his penny to spare.

Even the cripple responds to the rhythm; and the poet observes

That Mother, whose spirit in fetters is bound,  
 While she dandles the Babe in her arms to the sound.

The earlier *Reverie of Poor Susan* (1797) shows how a country-bred girl is moved by the song of a caged thrush to forget momentarily the hard streets of London in recollection of her native fields. Wordsworth transmutes city surroundings into scenery of her native valley.

Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,  
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,  
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;  
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,  
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

Crowds of men and women and the noises of traffic never appealed to Wordsworth as they did to Charles Lamb, who felt it impossible to be dull in Fleet Street, and who while walking about London streets at night shed tears because of the "fulness of joy at so much life." Solitude was essential to Wordsworth's being; the Wordsworth Concordance notes more than two hundred instances of the words "solitude" and "solitary." He is attracted by the more tranquil side streets where he is free to observe a father with his sick child, or poor Susan, or the fiddler and his audience. He can and does depict with poetic power and sure sense for suggestive detail the endless stream of men and moving things; the dance of colors, lights, and forms; the deafening din; the endless rows of facades; and shop after shop with inscriptions and flaring signs. But he impatiently escapes from these as from an enemy, and turns

Abruptly into some sequestered nook,  
Still as a sheltered place where winds blow loud!  
(*Prelude*, VII, 170-171)

Here sights and sounds come at intervals only; but he has sketched them with notice of street amusements chiefly

designed for children. There are dancing dogs, or he sees  
a dromedary with performing monkeys on his back; or

a raree-show is here,  
With children gathered round.

(*Prelude*, VII, 174-175)

Before Wordsworth, such elements as the raree-show  
appeared only in satirical verse; but Wordsworth has treated  
amusements of children in a mood of high seriousness that  
catches spiritual connotations not noticed by poets of the  
eighteenth century. These elements are more congenial to  
Wordsworth when he can observe them at a rural fair in one  
of the dales among his native hills, where on the green

stands a speech-maker by rote,  
Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show

among the itinerant hawkers and other country-fair attrac-  
tions for young and old.

The children now are rich, for the old today  
Are generous as the young . . .  
The days departed start again to life,  
And all the scenes of childhood reappear,  
Faint, but more tranquil. (VIII, 44-51)

Gaiety and cheerfulness prevail among old and young; yet  
to the brooding poet

How little they, they and their doings, seem,  
And all that they can further or obstruct!  
Through utter weakness pitiable dear,  
As tender infants are: and yet how great!  
For all things serve them. (VIII, 59-63)

They are ministered to by rocks, clouds, and

The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts;  
And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir  
Which animates this day their calm abode.  
(VIII, 67-69)



In the "turbulent" city Wordsworth felt the debt he owed to nature and "rural peace," where his heart had been first opened to beauty. He has enriched the material of satirical poets by throwing over commonplace events and experiences a halo born of imaginative treatment stirred by deep emotion.<sup>1</sup>

In their preoccupation with solitude in forests and by streams, poets had overlooked the possibilities of holidays enjoyed by children at fairs, theatres, and amusement places. Prior's *Alma* (1718) gives only a side glance to Smithfield Fair.<sup>2</sup> It is a curious fact that the only full and detailed picture of a city amusement resort should have been drawn as observed by the boy from a remote shire in the north of England. It was to be expected that he would be profoundly moved by the orators in Parliament.

Oh! the beating heart,  
When one among the prime of these rose up,—  
One, of whose name from childhood we had heard  
Familiarly, a household term, like those,  
The Bedfords, Glosters, Salisburys, of old  
Whom the fifth Harry talks of. (VII, 493-498)

This is the mood of a boy bred like Wordsworth to solid stability and faith in British institutions; it is in harmony too with his characteristic elevation of spirit. His vivid lines on Bartholomew Fair come somewhat as a surprise. Temperamentally out of sympathy with the perpetual whirl

<sup>1</sup> Contrast the luxuriant imagery of *Frost at Midnight*.

<sup>2</sup> Now mark, dear Richard, from the age  
That children tread this worldly stage,  
Broom-staff or poker they bestride,  
And round the parlour love to ride;  
Till thoughtful father's pious care  
Provides his brood, next Smithfield Fair,  
With supplemental hobby-horses. (Canto I)

of trivial objects and the anarchy and din "barbarian and infernal" of such a place, this simple north-country youth was momentarily fascinated by the

phantasma,  
Monstrous in color, motion, shape, sight, sound,

that constituted for him a "Parliament of Monsters." What fascinated him was that he saw there

blank confusion! true epitome  
Of what the mighty city is herself,  
To thousands upon thousands of her sons.

(VII, 722-724)

It was a shock for eyes and ears to see how tents and booths,

as if the whole were one vast mill,  
Are vomiting, receiving on all sides,  
Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms.

(719-721)

The passage depicts the motley spectacle of "All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things" in marvellous array.

The midway region, and above,  
Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,  
Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies;  
With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,  
And children whirling in their roundabouts;  
With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,  
And crack the voice in rivalry, the crowd  
Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons  
Grimacing, writhing, screaming,—him who grinds  
The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves,  
Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum,  
And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,  
The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel,  
Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,  
Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes.—

All moveables of wonder, from all parts,  
 Are here—Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,  
 The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig,  
 The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,  
 Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl,  
 The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,  
 The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft  
 Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows.

(VII, 691-713)

It is in fact a lively roll-call of what any child would delight to see, and the passage reproduces the spirit of youthful excitement and rapid change of interest easily satisfied on such a crowded stage.

Wordsworth had also been attracted by pantomime at Sadler's Wells, which must have been to English children of that age what the Hippodrome is to American children. With the unaffected delight of youth he took his seat there "more than once" to see

giants and dwarfs,  
 Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,  
 Amid the uproar of the rabblement,  
 Perform their feats.

(VII, 271-274)

Wordsworth's interest was that of a healthy youngster who with his worship of nature could blend pleasures of the average child. He was one of the noisy crew of school-boys at Hawkeshead, and he was equally a partaker of the more superficial pleasures provided by London for its children. At Sadler's Wells he beheld

The champion, Jack the Giant-killer: Lo!  
 He dons his coat of darkness; on the stage  
 Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye  
 Of living Mortal covert, "as the moon  
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave."  
 Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought?  
 The garb he wears is black as death, the word  
 "*Invisible*" flames forth upon his chest. (VII, 280-287)



Yet, even in those days, he had made no small progress in "meditations holy and sublime":

Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss  
Of novelty survived of scenes like these;  
Enjoyment haply handed down from times  
When at a country-playhouse, some rude barn  
Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance  
Caught, on a summer evening through a chink  
In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse  
Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was  
Gladdened me more than if I had been led  
Into a dazzling cavern of romance,  
Crowded with Genii busy among works  
Not to be looked at by the common sun.

(VII, 446-457)

Although it is clear from Ashton's researches<sup>1</sup> that a kind of entertainment appreciated by children was in vogue during the reign of Queen Anne, and although it is known that there were Christmas pantomimes, it is remarkable that these are not noticed by poets even in the satirical vein. Such Christmas theatricals and pantomimes as are designed especially for children at Yuletide in New York must have been common also in the London of those days. Although the Puritans had in 1642 made Christmas a day of prayer and fasting, pantomimes and Christmas plays seem to have flourished from the days of the seventeenth century itself. Merrymaking is implied, for instance, in Anna L. Barbauld's *Groans of the Tankard*:

No Carnival is even Christmas here  
And one long Lent involves the meagre year.

The Christmas Harlequinades which were given at Covent Garden and Drury Lane date from the seventeenth century, and were at their height under Garrick. They

<sup>1</sup> *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, by John Ashton. Compare also *A Right Merrie Christmasse* by the same author.

opened with a fairy tale, the characters of which changed to harlequin, columbine, and clown of the pantomime that followed. There were Christmas plays at Manchester Grammar School during 1739, 1740, and 1741. "The Monthly Review" in 1774 has a good review of *A Christmas Tale in Five Parts, A New Dramatic Entertainment*.

Children must surely have been diverted by the St. George plays with Old Father Christmas. Professor Manly quotes to show that the version he prints was used in the eighteenth century: "The man from whom I took (it) down had performed at Brill in the year 1807, and his father had done the same at Thame Park in the previous century." If the Lutterworth Christmas Play would have made less appeal to children, the Revesby Sword Play, Professor Manly's version of which is dated "October ye 20, 1779," would have fascinated them.

Carey does not notice theatricals in *Sally in Our Alley* (1715), although the thrifty apprentice lover says that he will save his money for Sally against the coming of Christmas. Christmas is, indeed, infrequently noticed in connection with childhood. Wordsworth has more fully than other poets referred to the holiday which is identified with children. He has noticed it in the *Idle Shepherd-Boys*, *To the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth*, *The Prelude*, and *The Thorn*, and connects the holiday with childhood in each poem.

In spite of all Wordsworth's childlike wonder, he is not confused by his novel experiences in London, but while telling the pathetic story of the Maid of Buttermere is loyal to his ideal of the simple life far from city excitements, and writes of her in terms of native fields. After her troubles ("The broad world rang with the maiden's name"),

She lives in peace  
Upon the spot where she was born and reared;  
Without contamination doth she live

In quietness, without anxiety:  
 Beside the mountain chapel, sleeps in earth  
 Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb  
 That, thither driven from some unsheltered place,  
 Rests underneath the little rock-like pile  
 When storms are raging. Happy are they both—  
 Mother and child! (VII, 320-329)

As he noticed children everywhere in city and country alike, so he observed with a peculiar tenderness the graves of children in the lonely churchyards of the north of England. His *Essays Upon Epitaphs* reflect an Englishman's interest in the graves of the village dead. Americans who on their travels do not identify England with London are impressed by the unaffected piety of worshippers in outlying parishes, who before and after vesper service walk about in God's acre, keeping green the memory of departed friends and relatives. There is nothing unusual or morbid in the impulse that led Wordsworth to write his essays, and to quote examples from memorial stones. How far he is from morbidity and the melancholy of Gray or White is clear from the feeling lines on his school companion at Hawkeshead, who lived but to be buried in the village where he was born. Wordsworth is not despondent, but his heart is touched by remembrance of the boy who was one of the "race of young ones":

This Boy was taken from his mates and died  
 In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.  
 Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale  
 Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs  
 Upon a slope above the village school,  
 And through the churchyard when my way has led  
 On summer evenings, I believe that there  
 A long half hour together I have stood  
 Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies.  
 (V, 389-397)



The custom of reading epitaphs reveals a simple sincerity that shows in English people that fibre of genuineness which Wordsworth admired and exalted in the "statesmen" of the Lake District. We have observed that Henry Kirke White had interwoven the custom with the return at eve of the laborer and his children, and Wordsworth, like that father in White's poem, draws lessons from what he reads. "In the obscure corner of a country church-yard I once espied, half overgrown with hemlock and nettles, a very small stone laid upon the ground, bearing nothing more than the name of the deceased with the date of birth and death, importing that it was an infant which had been born one day and died the following. I know not how far the Reader may be in sympathy with me; but more awful thoughts of rights conferred, of hopes awakened, or remembrances stealing away or vanishing, were imparted to my mind by that inscription there before my eyes than by any other that it has ever been my lot to meet with upon a tomb-stone." Among the epitaphs on children he quotes this example:

What Christ said once He said to all,  
Come unto Me, ye children small:  
None shall do you any wrong,  
For to My Kingdom you belong.

Wordsworth's genius is expressing itself with characteristic simple beauty when he writes that a pure woman's life is

As snowdrop on an infant's grave.<sup>1</sup>

In a beautiful sonnet he has with unadorned simplicity commemorated ancient rites observed by "rude Biscayans" in the burial of children who died in "sinless time of in-

<sup>1</sup> *Elegiac Stanzas* (Addressed to Sir G. H. B. upon the death of his sister-in-law), pub. 1827.

fancy."<sup>1</sup> In the third book of *The Excursion* the Solitary relates how he lost his "blooming girl" and her brother, the only remaining stay of his life; and the compact lines in the Lucy poems likewise voice the sense of loss experienced by those who are left behind. Wordsworth's meek spirit of Christian love comes out tenderly in the epitaph for his son Thomas (1812?).

Six months to six years added he remained  
 Upon this sinful earth, by sin unstained:  
 O blessed Lord! whose mercy then removed  
 A Child whom every eye that looked on loved;  
 Support us, teach us calmly to resign  
 What we possessed, and now is wholly thine!

## II

No serious attempt seems to have been made either by Wordsworth or by eighteenth-century poets to connect medieval castles and ruins with childhood. The castles and abbeys of which romantic poets loved to write, did not prove suitable places for children. When the earlier poets felt free to leave Pope and the classicist tradition, Thomson was their chief inspiration. They were too strongly drawn to universal benevolence and the return to nature to be deeply stirred by matters of antiquarian interest.<sup>2</sup> Beattie ignored the specifically medieval element in the ancestral seat of the young Lord Hay in order to write of uni-

<sup>1</sup> *Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*, XXIV, "In due observance of an ancient rite."

<sup>2</sup> J. G. Cooper's *Call of Aristippus* is hardly an exception. Cooper attempted to heighten the child's sense of fear by having him overtaken by night near a ruined abbey. Attracted by flowers, he had wandered in a forest, near which he sank down to rest amid the "dark horrors of the night" and far from a "fondling mother's sight." Cooper localizes the spot near "Where an old abbey stood."

versal benevolence. Wordsworth recollected childhood play within the confines of ruined abbeys and castles, but showed no inclination to develop medieval elements.

As a child Wordsworth played in and about Cockermouth Castle, Brougham Castle, and Furness Abbey. Yet in all recollections he subordinates the romantic element, where he is conscious of it at all, to his love of nature. Cockermouth Castle is of interest to him only in so far as the river Derwent reflected the shadow of the towers of that "shattered monument of feudal sway." In the *Address from the Spirit of Cockermouth Castle* the tower is a compeer stricken like himself in years. When as a child he entered the dungeon, he became a "prey to soul-appalling darkness," but only with the conventional result that his thoughts were led to the darkness of the grave. He chased the butterfly in the "green courts," or climbed the battlements to gather flowers. This is certainly not the spirit of romance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lovibond's *On Rebuilding Combe Neville* reveals greater sympathy with nature than with the castle background. Although his attention is about equally divided between nature and the castle, references to the latter are mechanical. They are hardly merged with the recollection of Lovibond's youthful roamings within the confines of Combe Neville, the seat of the kingmaker Warwick. The wars of the roses are alluded to; gatherings of knights and ladies are recalled; Warwick is spoken of as tilting in the courtyard. But such thoughts are suggested by the schoolboy's reading rather than by a mood induced by the castle itself. Such phrases as "dread mansion" and "gothic tower" suggest more to us than was felt by the youthful Lovibond. One stanza shows how unconscious he was of the romantic possibilities of the castle. He sought "thy awful grove," not to feel a pleasing sense of mystery or horror, but to soothe his evening hours with "that best deceiver, Love."

The morbid White must have had remote sympathies with the romantic gloom of castles and abbeys (*Childhood*). In youth he retired to the "gloomy glen" to muse on lofty themes, ancient lore,



Brougham Castle, "romantic" and "low-standing" by the margin of a stream, served to recall how he and Dorothy climbed the "darksome windings of a broken stair," and "not without trembling" climbed along a "fractured" wall. The trembling was not induced by fear of spirits. Instead, he and Dorothy looked through a "Gothic window's open space," not like Keats into fairy lands forlorn, but upon a "far-stretching landscape." Or they "lay on some turret's head" listening to the breeze as it lightly waved the tufts of grass and harebells. Their interest was chiefly in natural beauty. The castle, in spite of the mention of architectural details, is nothing more than a convenient belvedere.<sup>1</sup>

and heroes of old. By this time the modern reader is on the alert for romantic moods. White is in fact thinking of Britomart, Una, and "courteous Constance." On his evening walk, as he gazed up to the clouds, his fancy

stately towers descried, sublimely high,  
In Gothic grandeur frowning on the sky.

But here again the glimpse of romantic matter is fleeting, and connected only vaguely with his reminiscences of youthful walks.

In *Netley Abbey*, W. Sotheby, Esq., briefly notices the sentimental attitude of his boyish days. "At day's dim close" he had often stopped to meditate

where first arose  
The pointed ruin peeping o'er the wood.

He ascribes the mood to childhood: "with life's gay dawn th' illusions cease."

<sup>1</sup> Jago's *Edge Hill* (1767) shows premonitions of the value of romantic material. It is difficult for readers of Scott and Tennyson to realize just how much was associated in Jago's mind with such romantic names as Kenilworth, Guy of Warwick, Coventry, and Godiva. Such embellishments of medieval castles as the moat and portcullis are treated in the enumerative style. Jago's poem is topographical and has to do with the district near War-

His references to ruined shrines and temples are also bare of detail, as in *The Prelude*, when he merely notices Druidic remains or recalls in passing the "chaunted rites" which daily served the shrine of "Our Lady" on an island in Lake Windermere. He seems to feel little irreverence in boyish escapades among the ruins of Furness Abbey in the "Vale of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honor built." He and his schoolfellows whipped and spurred their horses, and flew through the chantry in "uncouth race," past the "cross-legged knight and the stone abbot," and out through openings in the ruined walls. If Wordsworth does not respond to the medieval relics, his spirit is moved by that "single wren" that sang so sweetly in the ruined nave that the poet could have lived there forever "to hear such music." The emphasis is on this element of natural beauty, although he seems to make a crude attempt to phrase something of romantic awe, but even here in terms of nature. There were faint

wick. In recalling Beaudesert, "old Montfort's lofty seat," where he ranged in childhood, he was unable to merge his feeling for castles with his childish experiences.

In the *Ruins of Pontefract Castle* (1756), Langhorne is absorbed in the physical danger attendant upon walking or standing near ruined walls. The frightened peasant, who steps swiftly by, feels for himself only the same physical fear that prompts the "pale matron" to call her "heedless" children from the "threatening wall." Neither is moved by the spirit of awe that later writers connected with ruins. Joseph Warton's *To Fancy* contains a passage conceived in the same mood:

Or to some abbey's mouldering towers,  
Where, to avoid cold wintry showers,  
The naked beggar shivering lies,  
While whistling tempests round her rise,  
And trembles lest the tottering wall  
Should on her sleeping infants fall.

Internal breezes, sobbings of the place  
And respirations, from the roofless walls  
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops.

(Prelude, II, 122-124)

In the use of specifically medieval elements in their influence on childhood, Wordsworth, therefore, shows no advance over previous poets.

Before he reached the stage of poetic development which gave him power to phrase a vivid sense of mysterious awe, felt by him as an emanation from natural objects in wood or field, Wordsworth experimented with horrific elements that derive from Blair, the ballads, and the German school of horror. He refers in the *Preface* to "sickly and stupid German tragedies," but was himself temporarily under the sway of their methods in such a poem as *The Thorn* and his tragedy *The Borderers*. He was, as Professor Winchester intimates, "influenced by the growing liking for the cruder forms of romance in drama and fiction at that period. Certainly some of the action and scenery of the play recall the bugaboo terrors of Horace Walpole or Monk Lewis."

That Wordsworth set out in *The Thorn* (1798) to emphasize the horrific element is clear both from his own prefatory remarks and from a comparison with Langhorne's lines on the thorn in *The Country-Justice*. In the choice of concrete details, Wordsworth's poem represents an extreme rebound from the classicist method. His intention was to make the commonplace seem unusual, the approach being by way of exhibiting "some of the general laws by which superstition acts upon the mind."

Langhorne's thorn is solitary, aged, and torn by winds of the heath on which it stands exposed: Wordsworth's thorn is "aged," "old and grey," "a wretched thing forlorn," and stands "high on a mountain's highest ridge," exposed



to "the stormy winter gale" that "cuts like a scythe." Wordsworth has all the elements of Langhorne except the moonlight, which by Wordsworth is converted into the time when "frosty air is keen and still." He adds to the elements of the earlier poet a specific and concrete quality. Langhorne proceeds at once to the "horror" which stopped a "felon in his flight." The horror is not supernatural, but is the result of lack of benevolence in a community put to shame by the tenderhearted felon whose sympathy is moved by the plight of the new-born infant found by him near the thorn and carried, in the face of personal danger, to the nearest cottage. The intention of Langhorne is to depict the workings of universal benevolence even in the heart of a man hunted by officials of organized society. Wordsworth, on the other hand, crudely endeavors to motivate the supernatural by reference to the height of the thorn, which is

Not higher than a two years' child.

He emphasizes the distorted appearance of the wind-swept thorn, and takes out his measuring stick in order to report that the thorn is not five yards from the mountain path. He returns to what he considers the creepy style by calling attention to

A beauteous heap, a hill of moss,  
Just half a foot in height,

on which one may see "All colours that were ever seen." He singles out a deep vermilion, and in the next stanza speaks of "scarlet bright."

This heap of earth o'ergrown with moss,  
Which close beside the Thorn you see,  
So fresh in all its beauteous dyes,  
Is like an infant's grave in size,  
As like as like can be:  
But never, never anywhere,  
An infant's grave was half so fair.

And when later he introduces the doleful Martha Ray, clad in "a scarlet cloak," he does so by repeating the allusion to the infant's grave. She

oft there sits between the heap,  
So like an infant's grave in size.

In the ninth stanza he again summarizes his opening lines and refers once more to the "hillock like an infant's grave." As if this were finally adequate suggestion of something mysterious and gruesome, he enters upon the story of the girl's betrayal and the connection between her child and the thorn near which she often sat even in inclement weather. The childhood theme is realized with the same painful literalness as the poet's exact measurements. The physical horrors of blood stains on the moss of the child's grave are phrased with crude directness. That Wordsworth was consciously working in the mood of the school of terror is clear from the way he incorporates graveyard horrors.

Some say if to the pond you go,  
And fix on it a steady view,  
The shadow of a babe you trace,  
A baby and a baby's face,  
And that it looks at you;  
Whene'er you look on it, 'tis plain  
The baby looks at you again.

As if this were not sufficient, he adds that the authorities who come to examine the hill of moss are frightened off by the heaving of the sod for fifty yards around.

If the poem could be read as a travesty of the sort of thing Lewis stood for, it would be interesting; but Wordsworth took the subject seriously, and the poem is painful even to the inner circle of Wordsworthians. It is interesting to note that the hillocks noticed in Blair's *Grave* include one "of a span long," the resting place of a child that "never

saw the sun." In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth asks his reader to mark a daisied hillock "three spans long," a phrase which is compared by Mr. W. Knight with an identical phrase in Bürger's *Pfarrer's Tochter*, from which Wordsworth's phrase may have derived. *The Thorn* represents Wordsworth's fleeting interest in a phase of romantic poetry which is not congenial to his powers.<sup>1</sup>

He is at his best when he portrays in *The Prelude*, in connection with reminiscences of Hawkeshead days, the subtler influences that emanated from nature to teach the boy the mysterious power of a presence that can not be seen with the physical eye. He was one of a race of real children who went tired to bed from boisterous play. The glad animal spirits which made them healthy youngsters were, occasionally at least, supplemented in Wordsworth, even at the age of ten, by experiences of subtler origin. He wrote an epic of his boyish adventures "while yet a schoolboy." It was a long poem that included "my own adventures, and the scenery of the country in which I was brought up." The earliest extant verses, "written as a school exercise at Hawkeshead anno aetatis 14", contain these lines:

To teach, on rapid wings, the curious soul  
To roam from heaven to heaven, from pole to pole,  
From thence to search the mystic cause of things  
And follow Nature to her secret springs;  
Nor less to guide the fluctuating youth  
Firm in the sacred paths of moral truth.

Among the genuine boyish experiences recounted in *The Prelude*, that of the stolen boat ride reveals his sensitiveness to the mysterious power emanating from nature.

<sup>1</sup> *A Fragment* (supposed to have been found in a dark passage in the Tower of London), by Miss Helen Maria Williams, is equally crude in its attempt to arouse sympathy for children murdered in the Tower.



Throughout the narrative there is a solid substratum of physical experience, of which he never loses sight, and out of which grew naturally his sense of "huge and mighty forms" that were a trouble to his dreams.

By following the natural sequence of the boy's psychological reactions to external phenomena, which are clearly visualized, he succeeds in expressing his vivid sense of the working of mysterious forces. Beyond the unobtrusive allusion to his little boat as an "elfin pinnacle," he makes no effort to add an element of the strange and extraordinary. The boy is enjoying a "troubled pleasure" because he realizes that the boat ride is "an act of stealth," but he is responsive to the "small circles glittering idly in the moon" as he pulls lustily at the oars. To reach his chosen goal "with an unswerving line," he fixed his eye on the "summit of a craggy ridge":

I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat  
Went heaving through the water like a swan;  
When, from behind that craggy steep till then  
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,  
As if with voluntary power instinct  
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,  
And growing still in stature the grim shape  
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,  
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own  
And measured motion like a living thing,  
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,  
And through the silent water stole my way  
Back to the covert of the willow tree;  
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—  
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave  
And serious mood; but after I had seen  
That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts

There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
 Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
 Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;  
 But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
 Like living men, moved slowly through my mind  
 By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

(I, 374-400)

As he looks back to this experience, Wordsworth breaks into a song of thanks to the "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe" which had purified his feelings and thoughts by bringing him into contact with enduring things.

not in vain  
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
 The passions that build up our human soul.

(I, 404-407)

Wordsworth's recollection of nocturnal visits to the snares set by his companions is interesting in the light of Blair's schoolboy in the graveyard. In Blair's *Grave* there is no motivation of the boy's fear beyond the superstitious awe commonly attributed to human beings who walk in country graveyards while moon shadows are projected across nettle-skirted and moss-covered stones. Blair holds to simple traditions of horrid apparitions that are tall and ghastly and take stand over some "new-opened" grave. It is the sort of stuff out of which were made those ballads learned by country lads from their grandame at the ingle-side. Blair is in fact using material that could have been supplied him by almost any child in his parish in Scotland. Wordsworth, on the other hand, concentrates on the ordinary remorse which any boy would feel when alone in the woods at night after having emptied the snares set by school

companions. The boy's better reason had been overpowered, and he had taken the bird which was the rightful prey of another. Ghosts did not pursue him. Wordsworth's art is not, as in *The Thorn*, identified with that of the fleshly school. He states the ordinary facts of the reaction of a guilty boy to his awakening conscience. He does this not in terms of eighteenth-century moralizing, but in phrasings that, while not destroying the physical reality of his environment, permeate it with warning powers "of soft alarm." He spiritualizes the phenomena of nature. Blair's school-boy hears the sound of something purring at his heels, and then runs as fast as his legs will carry him. Wordsworth heard "low breathings coming after" of "undistinguishable motion," and steps that were as silent as the turf they trod. They are too subtle to be identified in terms of Blair's traditional graymalkin "purring" at a boy's heels.

Wordsworth, then, is successful in conveying his sense of the mysterious when he holds closely to naturalistic elements, and makes no effort to create agencies that are not in harmony with the manifestations of external nature.

Where Blair is conventional in the manipulation of ghostly elements, Wordsworth identifies the mysterious with certain phenomena of external nature. He secures the desired effect by a high suggestion of something "more" than what was vouchsafed to descriptive poets. Wordsworth's penetrative power goes deeper than externals: a yellow cowslip was "nothing more" than a yellow cowslip to Peter Bell, but flowers and the phenomena of woods and fields suggest higher powers to Wordsworth and give him thoughts that lie too deep for tears.<sup>1</sup> He again and again states his faith in the ministrations of nature, as in *The Tables Turned* (1798):

<sup>1</sup> Compare Gray's *Vicissitude*.



One impulse from a vernal wood  
 May teach you more of man,  
 Of moral evil and of good,  
 Than all the sages can.

Such a process is perfectly normal, for he emphasizes elementary feelings; and he accepts as a fact in his philosophy that "man and nature are essentially adapted to each other."

### III

By a "faithful adherence to the truth of nature," which in Wordsworth's poetry means more than the literal external facts, he awakens civilized man from the "lethargy of custom" by reference to powers to which any "feeling mind" may awaken itself if man will but be as simple and natural as a child. Wordsworth recognizes the beneficent supplementing influence of man, especially as revealed in the affectionate teachings of a cottage mother; but he never omits the influence of nature on the child mind.

poor men's children, they and they alone,  
 By their condition taught, can understand  
 The wisdom of the prayer that daily asks  
 For daily bread. A consciousness is yours  
 How feelingly religion may be learned  
 In smoky cabins, from a mother's tongue—  
 Heard while the dwelling vibrates to the din  
 Of the contiguous torrent. (*Excursion*, IV, 786-793)

In the light of this attitude it is only natural that when Wordsworth was thinking of the problem of immortality and met the little cottage girl in the area of Goodrich Castle in 1793, he should see in her simple faith a true expression of the cottage child's spiritual instincts. He is not tempted to develop the graveyard background in the mood of Blair, nor does he drift into the sentimental sadness of Gray. He writes steadily with his eye on the object. In

*We Are Seven* (1798) the cottage child has ceased to be treated as one of a group. In this detached poem Wordsworth concentrates his attention upon her as an individual. He not only notes the details of her surroundings and domestic background, but individualizes her physically. His deep sympathy is plain also in the lines which analyze the probable reasons for the child's reaction to his questions. Where previous poets have not gone beyond the bounds of play and physical recreation, Wordsworth tries to penetrate to the innermost workings of the child mind. ✓

The untutored affection of childhood is reflected in her habits, which are true to child nature in the environment in which she is placed. Her implicit faith is naturally expressed in the simple stanza of the folk ballad. All phases of Wordsworth's conception and expression are adapted to the portrayal of simple child nature.<sup>1</sup>

Wordsworth ascribes to her all physical characteristics found in connection with the traditional poetic conception of idyllic cottage children, with the difference that he individualizes her and allows her to appear as a vital, living being in the dialogue. He states her age precisely; curls clustered about her head. There is just a touch of ballad remoteness when he writes, in connection with her mystic woodland air, that she was "wildly clad." The romantic suggestion, in place of a more literal descriptive word, at once removes the child from the garish light of common experience, without, however, destroying physical reality. Her beauty, which made the poet glad, is enhanced by eyes that are "fair and very fair."

<sup>1</sup> He may have learned from Blake something of the elemental effectiveness of the question and answer method, for some of the lines in *We Are Seven* seem to echo such a question as "Where are thy father and mother, say" of Blake's *Chimney-Sweeper* in *Songs of Experience*.

Then the dialogue commences, in which the poet is worsted by the little maid who will not concede that two of the family have been removed by death. The first stanza, in the composition of which Coleridge assisted, has prepared the reader to sympathize with her inability to comprehend the idea of cessation of being. Wordsworth's analysis of child nature reveals a new element in poetry about children. Judged by the standards of creative art, the canon of Wordsworth's poetry reveals no greater achievement in the presentation of a cottage child.

Blake's children live out the idea of vigor and vitality that can recognize no cessation of activity: Wordsworth's poem is conceived with characteristic tranquillity and repose. With simplicity and limpid clearness it illustrates Wordsworth's philosophy. Here as elsewhere in his poetry about children, his interest is not like Blake's in the "childishness of childhood," for Wordsworth had a "wondering, questioning interest in the child mind," which is revealed especially in *We Are Seven* and in the lines to Hartley Coleridge.

It is not necessary to justify the child psychology upon which Wordsworth proceeds in *We Are Seven*. It is beside the point to argue about imaginary companions; or to say that children do not lie when they refer to imaginary playmates, but that their attitude is due to real confusion. It is unnecessary to speak of their vivid sense of reality in play-life, or of their failure to be conscious of the need of distinguishing between intensely real play moments and the world of external fact which, as Wordsworth says in the *Ode*, presses upon them later with a weight heavy as frost and deep almost as life. It is beside the point to consider these matters, because, although Wordsworth had something of the semblance of a philosophy about the relationship between childhood and nature, he was out of sympathy with



the scientific attitude which prompted a man to peep and botanize upon his mother's grave. He intuitively accepted a fact of common experience and illustrated it in the attitude of the child who unquestioningly accepts the fact in its full simplicity.

Aside from the interest which the poem has ever commanded as a perfect expression of one phase of childhood, it is of interest too as an early study that foreshadows Wordsworth's deep and instinctive faith in childhood as revealed in the *Ode*. In *We Are Seven* the child is individualized and realized as a human being at the same time that Wordsworth gives expression to his faith in the child's instinctive belief in immortality. }

Even *Michael* falls far behind this poem, although images of the infant Luke are flashed upon the reader. Luke acts naturally enough, and is truly conceived as a cottage child; but the portrait lacks the full individualizing lines of *We Are Seven* both in externalities and in moral qualities. Luke is the victim of circumstances—fate, perhaps—and his reactions to events are pictured chiefly in terms of his father's experiences. Luke is neither morally nor physically at the center of the poem. Wordsworth's sympathy and analysis are centered in Michael. The expository Fenwick note recognizes the fact that much of the poem turns upon Michael's sheepfold, the erection of which was begun with the aid of Luke. In the return at eve, Luke, who has come home from the fields with his father, is not singled out. He sits down with his parents to the cleanly supper-board with its mess of pottage, skimmed milk, cheese, and basket "piled high with oaten cakes." And in the thrifty occupations of the evening hours, his activities are merged with the father's in the repair of utensils or in the carding of wool. After the first one hundred and fifty lines, the child's activities

are not presented in direct action, but in the recollection of Michael.

The reader is gradually carried forward to the boy's eighteenth year, at which time unforeseen misfortunes fell upon Michael. At this point the affection for native fields determines Michael's choice of alternatives, and he decides to send his son into the great city in preference to selling a portion of his "patrimonial fields." In the considerations that lead up to Michael's decision, Luke plays no active part. He is not pictured as in any way actively guiding or relieving the moral anguish of his father. Michael alone makes the decision.

Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land  
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;  
We shall possess it, free as is the wind  
That passes over it.

It would be shallow to derive the pathetic scenes at the close of *Michael* from sentimental poetry of the previous century. The sentimental tradition may be felt in certain lines of *The Brothers*, but in the simple affection of Michael we feel the heart-beats of a father and mother who must part with their only child, and who, with dread, consign him to the keeping of a distant relative in a wicked city. Even at the close of the poem, after the fatal blow has fallen upon him, and he realizes that his son is lost to him, Michael does not lose heart, but resolves at the age of eighty-four to climb the heights once more. It was not sentiment that prompted the laying of the first stone at the sheepfold which was never completed, although the old man spent many an hour there after Luke had left him. To Michael the laying of the stone was a covenant between father and son.

Wordsworth's exaltation of cottage children involves a fuller and more affectionate notice of the English cottage

than is found in poetry of the eighteenth century. On the basis of his poetry it is possible to reconstruct the background and activities of cottage children. He notices how cottage windows blaze through the twilight in the frosty season; he gives details of the peat fire; he notices the frugal fare of cottage children.

And three fair Children, plentifully fed  
 Though simply, from their little household farm.  
 (*Excursion*, VII, 162-163)

He depicts the sad home coming of Margaret, Goody Blake gathering faggots, and like Thomson loves to muse by the half-kitchen, half-parlor fire in his cottage. The cottage and cottage children lie at the heart of his conception of life.

After the disillusionment following closely upon England's declaration of war against the France which for him still stood for the spirit of freedom, and after his loss of faith in France itself because of Revolutionary excesses, he was wooed back to nature and cottage simplicity by Dorothy. Up to the time "Britain opposed the Liberties of France" he recognized a continuous development from childhood to manhood:

In brief, a Child of Nature, as at first,  
 Diffusing only those affections wider  
 That from the cradle had grown up with me,  
 And loving, in no other way than light  
 Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.  
 (*Prelude*, XI, 168-172)

In the period of readjustment at Racedown (1795-1797) his love of cottage life slowly reasserted itself, at Alfoxden (1797-1798) he wrote his homely lyrical ballads, and while in Germany composed beautiful lines about the unidentified cottage girl in the Lucy poems. Upon his return from Germany, when he instinctively turned in 1799 toward his



native fields among the Lakes, he settled at Dove Cottage, which is today the shrine peculiarly associated with his name. In *The Recluse* he acknowledged that many other nooks of earth have the attraction of Grasmere, but nowhere else

can be found  
The one sensation that is here; 'tis here,  
Here as it found its way into my heart  
In childhood.

In *The Prelude*, he recalled at length his own simple experiences among cottagers of the Lake District, from which he had been absent less than a decade.

\* Those poems which are most valued today were conceived in harmony with the moods and ideals to which he gave full expression in *The Prelude*. He saw in children the manifestations which had won him back to nature and self after the moral crisis of the nineties. 'With childhood he associated all that is beautiful and ennobling in life.' In childhood man lives closest to nature, and it was his firm belief that England could be saved only if Englishmen would live simply in communion with nature. His interest in nature and children was not that of an esthete; he was a humanitarian who inherited the ethical interest of the benevolists from Thomson to Southey.

After his meeting with Michael Beaupuy, whose conversation had stirred him to the depths, nature yielded first place to man. While in France, he had been moved to compassion by examples of suffering among the cottage poor, for the amelioration of whose condition such men as Beaupuy were striving. Wordsworth's sturdy democratic spirit resented class privilege with its resultant abuses, which were manifest in monarchical France. Awakened to social consciousness, he was keenly alive to suffering, and characteristically made his point by way of childhood.

When we chanced

One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,  
 Who crept along fitting her languid gait  
 Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord  
 Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane  
 Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands  
 Was busy knitting in a heartless mood  
 Of solitude, and at the sight my friend  
 In agitation said, "Tis against *that*  
 That we are fighting," I with him believed  
 That a benignant spirit was abroad  
 Which might not be withstood, that poverty  
 Abject as this would in a little time  
 Be found no more, that we should see the earth  
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompense  
 The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,  
 All institutes forever blotted out  
 That legalised exclusion, empty pomp  
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,  
 Whether by edict of the one or few;  
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,  
 Should see the people having a strong hand  
 In framing their own laws; whence better days  
 To all mankind.

(*Prelude*, IX, 509-532)

*French  
Revolution*

In those early days of Revolutionary enthusiasm he still believed in the fallacious doctrine that mankind could be reformed by legislation. This attitude resulted in temporary disillusionment and the moral crisis from which he emerged with a sound conviction that the highest hopes for man lay in the individual; and because the child is father of the man, in the child. By way of the child, then, especially in its domestic relations, and in the duties of the state toward children in elementary education, he delivered his message.

While Dorothy was winning him back to himself at Racedown, where he did not find a sturdy and independent peasantry such as is reflected in *Michael*, he saw what pained him and was in keeping with the background of *Guilt and*

*Sorrow; or Incidents upon Salisbury Plain* (1791-1794). The widow with her children in *Guilt and Sorrow* is effectively dramatized, and his indignation is aroused by the father who had been provoked by a "simple freak of thoughtless play" to beat his child cruelly. In the critical years of his life, when the poet in him lay in the balance, Wordsworth was stirred by the humanitarian spirit that had pervaded English poetry for over half a century before 1795.

In keeping with his strong local feeling and his centripetal nature, which loved to soar but not to roam, he associated heaven and home as kindred points. In fact, his deep feeling for childhood implies a high conception of home virtues. Like the poets before him, he exalted motherhood and the place of the mother with her children in the home. He would have accepted the old English proverb that a good mother is worth a hundred schoolmasters, and certainly wrote in the spirit of Lord Langdale, who said, "If the world were put into one scale, and my mother into the other, the world would kick the beam."

His is not a blind devotion. He saw his mother clearly and truly as a human mother. He is like the benevolist poets in that he could not follow naturalistic philosophy in all its implications. Wordsworth had read Shaftesbury, and remarked that he was "An author, at present unjustly depreciated." He was influenced by Rousseau and the return to nature, and his humanitarian thesis involved much of what in the native English tradition had been developed on the assumption of natural goodness. He wrote in *The Prelude* that evil is but a shade of good, a statement which reflects the doctrines of sentimental comedy and domestic tragedy. He did not, however, logically apply those naturalistic implications involved in the exaltation of primitive life as represented, for instance, by the American Indian.



Although not expressing himself in the crude manner of Day, he yet harbored no illusions about primeval purity in savages. In the lines to his infant Dora he draws a comparison unfavorable to Indian life. In the course of his musings he reveals the essentials of his attitude toward motherhood by recognizing the value of culture and the graces of civilization. In the Indian mother

the maternal sympathy itself,  
Though strong, is, in the main, a joyless tie  
Of naked instinct, wound about the heart.

(*Address to my Infant Daughter, Dora*)

+ In the exaltation of his mother he thought of more than creature comforts, which occupy so large a place in Cowper's recollection. The essentially spiritual and freedom-loving Wordsworth praised his mother for her wise self-restraint in allowing a higher freedom than could be enjoyed by children who were subjected to meddling and "improvement."

{ Motherhood is at the center of two of his most vital passages: one in *The Prelude* when he recollects his own mother and her influence on his childhood; and the other in *The Excursion* when he makes a plea for the natural rights of children who are deprived of a mother's influence because an industrial age usurps her time and saps her energy.

Although Cowper's poem on his mother excels in finality of expression, Wordsworth's lines are of the highest value in a study taking into account the social as well as the literary influences that mould a poet and determine his attitude toward childhood. Wordsworth responded obviously to the new forces that had as their aim the amelioration of childhood. His attitude towards his mother and her care of him reveals his fundamental understanding of child welfare in what is on the whole the modern conception.

Although not published until 1850, the year of his death, *The Prelude, or The Growth of a Poet's Mind; an Autobiographical Poem*, was begun at the opening of the year 1799, and was completed in the summer of 1805. During these years, moral tales and systems of education, both native and imported, were still in vogue. Among the really valuable English schemes that helped to point the way to a system of popular education in 1878 were those of Lancaster and Bell, sponsored in 1798, and flourishing side by side. The real difference between these systems was that Lancaster proceeded on a wholly secular basis, while Bell espoused the education of children in religion as well, and finally received the organized support of the "National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales." Side by side with these genuine and, for their time, successful efforts, and in many cases antedating them, were the amateur systems which had sprung up as the result of the Rousseau impetus in Germany and France. These were rapidly taken up in England by the writers of moral tales, and by amateur authors on education, and were transplanted in translations like those of Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Holcroft.

In view of Wordsworth's pronunciamento on the evil results of industry in its interference with the inborn right of children to a free, open-air childhood, and in view of his attitude on the native nobility of nature's gentlemen as represented in the ideal peasant who enjoyed true freedom, it was to be expected that he would be out of sympathy with cramping and cramming systems that failed to catch the spirit of freedom essential to his philosophy of life with respect to children. Although he was not specifically a follower of Rousseau, his doctrine of the minimum of interference, restraint, and guidance is in practical guise some-

thing very much like Rousseau's belief that with the child one should not gain time but lose it. Like Rousseau, Wordsworth was not concerned with making a man of the child as soon as possible; he believed that the child should live the days of childhood for what they are rather than, as in the institutional system, wholly from a regard for what they promise for the future. Like Rousseau, then, and Blake, he recognized the individuality of the period of childhood, and respected it. The child was to be allowed to roam at will in books, but especially in nature, which is the breath of God. There he would experience true life. (*Excursion*, II, 28ff.) ✓

Wordsworth has been frequently misunderstood as condemning, or at least belittling, the influence of books. As a matter of fact, he was with Dorothy a persistent reader of English poetry. Although recognizing the superior influence of nature, he was led to take an unfavorable attitude toward books only in so far as they were misused in the schools and amateur systems of home education. It is necessary for a true conception to realize that he does not belittle books, to which he is more than just. He believes that they have profoundly influenced the heart of man, "whether by native prose of numerous verse," from the lofty notes of Homer to the "low and wren-like warblings" and ballads for common folk. Although he has many times spoken of the value and delights of reading, perhaps the most significant passage occurs in *The Prelude*.

'Tis just that in behalf of these, the works,  
And of the men that framed them, whether known,  
Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves,  
That I should here assert their rights, attest  
Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce  
Their benediction; speak of them as Powers  
For ever to be hallowed. (V, 213-219)



Wordsworth's objection is wholly to the confinement of children to books and systems of reading that exclude enjoyment and delight in the works of nature. He asks how he and Coleridge would have developed into poets if in lieu of wandering at will through vales and over open ground

We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,  
Each in his several melancholy walk  
Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed,  
Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude. (V, 238-241)

His scorn and contempt for the model child are expressed at length. Early trained to worship seemliness and convention, this child is never known to quarrel. Wordsworth condemns the sickly humanitarianism of the child that with "gifts bubbles o'er as generous as a fountain." Such a child is never selfish, and no childish pleasure can ever tempt him. The wandering beggars "propagate his name," and dumb creatures find him "tender as a nun."

To enhance the wonder, see  
How arch his notices, how nice his sense  
Of the ridiculous; not blind is he  
To the broad follies of the licensed world,  
Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd,  
And can read lectures upon innocence.

(V, 309-314)

The products of fashionable systems were far from representing the ideal freedom which was advocated by Rousseau and Wordsworth, and which Wordsworth in his abnormal love of freedom in his youth carried so far that his hatred of restraint caused him to "turn from regulations even of my own." The cramming process then in vogue produced infant prodigies who in his eyes were little monstrosities.

A miracle of scientific lore,  
 Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,  
 And tell you all their cunning; he can read  
 The inside of the earth, and spell the stars;  
 He knows the policies of foreign lands;  
 Can string you names of districts, cities, towns,  
 The whole world over, tight as beads of dew  
 Upon a gossamer thread; he sifts, he weighs;  
 All things are put to question; he must live  
 Knowing that he grows wiser every day  
 Or else not live at all, and seeing too  
 Each little drop of wisdom as it falls  
 Into the dimpling cistern of his heart. (V, 315-327)

Wordsworth's heart goes out to the child, who is not to be blamed:

For this unnatural growth the trainer blame,  
 Pity the tree.

Wordsworth could not endure violence to child nature, and like Blake rebelled against interference with the sanctity of childhood. The child could have no freedom in one of the systems devised for his education:

For, ever as a thought of purer birth  
 Rises to lead him toward a better clime,  
 Some intermeddler still is on the watch  
 To drive him back, and pound him, like a stray,  
 Within the pinfold of his own conceit. (V, 332-336)

Meanwhile Mother Earth is grieved to find that all the playthings she had designed for her child are unthought of; the flowers in their woodland beds mourn the absence of children, and the banks of rivers are lonely without roving youngsters.

What would we not sacrifice for a glimpse of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Lamb (for they had grown up in the days of chap books and Newberry's volumes, before moral

tales had cast their blight) about a table discussing the pernicious effects of misdirected efforts in contemporary education. They scorned "These mighty workmen of our later age" who have the skill to manage books and things so as to make them act on infant minds "as surely as the sun Deals with a flower." These people have set up as guides and wardens of men's minds, and are sages who "in their prescience would control All accidents," and confine men to the road which they have built. Wordsworth, in despair, wishes to know if their presumption will ever allow them to learn that a wiser spirit is at work for man. Wordsworth and his friends must often have exchanged reminiscences of those happier early days for children when the curse of encyclopedic knowledge had not operated. He longed for the days of imaginative, freedom-giving fairy tales and stories of wonder.

Oh! give us once again the wishing-cap  
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat  
Of Jack the Giant-Killer, Robin Hood,  
And Sabra in the forest with St. George!

(V, 341-344)

He does not hold back the reason for his preference:

The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap  
One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

In this connection he paid the memorable tribute to his "honoured Mother," who died when he was only eight. He feels that to "break upon the sabbath of her rest" in connection with his condemnation of systems is almost blasphemous. He would not link her memory "With any thought that looks at others' blame." She typifies the essence of that beneficent influence which shielded him from subjection to amateur systems and novelties in education.



She respected the character of her children. She did not, like many mothers at the close of the century, presumptuously arrogate the power of close supervision,

Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust  
Our nature, but had virtual faith that He  
Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,  
Doth also for our nobler part provide,  
Under His great correction and control,  
As innocent instincts, and as innocent food;  
Or draws for minds that are left free to trust  
In the simplicities of opening life  
Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.  
This was her creed, and therefore she was pure  
From anxious fear of error or mishap,  
And evil, overweeningly so called;  
Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,  
Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,  
Nor with impatience from the season asked  
More than its timely produce; rather loved  
The hours for what they are, than from regard  
Glanced on their promises in restless pride.  
Such was she—not from faculties more strong  
Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,  
And spot in which she lived, and through a grace  
Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,  
A heart that found benignity and hope,  
Being itself benign.

(V, 270-293)

As in Blake's conception, all knowledge should be delight, which in Wordsworth's interpretation is to be found in the presence of enduring things in nature. He exalts his mother for giving the early freedom that brought him into the presence of nature, where infant sensibility might be augmented and sustained in freedom, the "great birthright of our being."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Victor Hugo looked back to his mother with affection because she had rescued him from the irksome confinement of the grammar school.

Wordsworth recognizes the same beneficent freedom from restraint in his second mother, the school at Hawkeshead, where he was not closely held to routine. He notes that the scholars might have fed upon a fatter soil of arts and letters, but says, "be that forgiven," for they had gained knowledge without loss of power. At Cambridge he found himself ill prepared for "sedentary peace" and academic discipline. He never read for honors, and in choosing a walking tour through the Alps during his third summer vacation was guilty of a "hardy slight" of college studies and their rewards.

For I, bred up mid Nature's luxuries,  
Was a spoiled child, and rambling like the wind,  
As I had done in daily intercourse  
With those crystalline rivers, solemn heights,  
And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air,  
I was ill-tutored for captivity. (III, 351-356)

To him, confinement to courses stood for instruction, while freedom for play of the senses and sensibilities in fields and woods stood for education.

Although not definitely correlating play and study in the curriculum, Wordsworth did insist on the right to freedom from supervision and control in order to liberate the child for the natural guidance of woods and streams. It is significant that he named the two first books of *The Prelude* not "School" but "School-time." In his poetry, play is in fact raised to the level of an educational force. By play he means rougher sports such as are chronicled in *The Prelude*; but he means also such subtler experiences as he reported in the snaring of the woodcock, climbing to the raven's nest, and skating on Esthwaite. In his explicit recognition of the value of play he crystallizes the thought of Lovibond, Bruce, and Mickle, who recognized play as a factor in character building. Unlike them, Wordsworth

has developed his attitude in expository passages attendant upon poetic representation of his autobiographical experiences. Gay as a boy in Devonshire, and Langhorne in the Lake District, had certainly enjoyed many of the sports recorded by Wordsworth. The time, however, had not been ripe for the definite statement of an attitude holding that children were not uselessly employed in the changes of seasonal exercise or play which the year brings "in his delightful round." Wordsworth's modern attitude is clearly phrased in the Duddon sonnet in which after a typical encomium on streams as companions for children, he writes,

Nor have I tracked their course for scanty gains;  
They taught me random cares and truant joys,  
That shield from mischief and preserve from 'stains  
Vague minds, while men are growing out of boys.

*(The River Duddon, 26)*

This is in harmony with his belief that the child's mind should not show too many traces of the handiwork of man, whose meddling and systematizing would straighten the windings of the Duddon and the Derwent.

Wordsworth stands for natural development with a minimum of interference. Modern study of child psychology indicates that his conception was not merely idealistic. Scientific observation has made clear the need of broad sense experience for the young child, because, being essentially sensory and motor, his life is made up largely of percepts. He responds with chameleon rapidity to his environment; every object appeals to his senses; there is no mixture or confusion of motives to prevent him from trying to realize the physical concomitants that awaken and appeal to his emotions. The most widely accepted authority holds that the mature man's proficiency in the manipulation of more complex mental states is directly dependent



on the richness, clearness, and breadth of the child's early sense perceptions. This is the attitude of Wordsworth in the passages which lovingly recall rosy-cheeked school-boys, the oldest of whom was no taller than a counsellor's bag—who listened to the cuckoo and felt the presence of an unknown power. Wordsworth pitied the boy Coleridge, who was compelled to spend his school days "in the depths of the huge city" where he was restricted in his view of nature to the "leaded roof of that wide edifice, thy school and home."

His most extended exposition occurs in the fervid lines of *The Prelude* in which he calls that babe blessed who is nursed in its mother's arms and "with his soul Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye."

For him, in one dear Presence, there exists  
A virtue which irradiates and exalts  
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.

(II, 238-240)

Such a child is not bewildered or depressed. The hand of love beautifies all natural objects to which as a babe he is too weak to do more than point. Having drunk from love's purest earthly fount of tenderness, such a child clearly feels pity for whatever is unsightly or bears the marks of violence and harm. Such a babe, growing up under such influences, is not an ideal:

Emphatically such a Being lives,  
Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,  
An inmate of this active universe!  
For feeling has to him imparted power  
That through the growing faculties of sense  
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind  
Create, creator and receiver both,  
Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds.

(II, 252-260)

This first true spirit of man's life, clearly manifest in the natural child, is abated or suppressed by convention, "By uniform control of after years." The loss which he indicates in *The Prelude*, and bemoans in the *Ode*, represents a true experience that can be explained by modern psychology. It teaches that in place of the child's indiscriminate observation, the man tends to focalize his interest along certain definite lines. The man thereby loses his childish spontaneous joy in the consciously controlled efforts and responses of maturity. In order, therefore, that the child may enjoy his heaven-sent harmony with God's creation as fully as possible, Wordsworth would eliminate much of the outside interference of instruction which falsely goes under the name of education.<sup>1</sup> He is convinced at heart, and makes the point again and again,

How little those formalities, to which  
With overweening trust alone we give  
The name of Education, have to do  
With real feeling and just sense. (XIII, 169-172)

His philosophy of child delight and happiness, which is essentially that of Blake also, but fully and consciously developed, is explained by his temperamental love and exaltation of simple dalesmen. In them the tutorings of nature, untrammelled by convention, have preserved a child-like spirit of love and reverence for natural objects. These are the teachings of *The Prelude*.

<sup>1</sup> Compare his lines on Cambridge, *The Prelude*, Book II, ll. 591-608, but especially:

And blind Authority beating with his staff  
The child that might have led him.

In *The Excursion* (1815) the earlier, supple, naturalistic attitude, still close to Shaftesbury and Rousseau in spirit at least, has lost some of its freshness and charm in the matter-of-fact atmosphere that permeates the long expository passages on questions of public interest.

Even before the completion of *The Prelude*, at the time when his thoughts were occupied with recollections of his own childhood, he often assumed a didactic manner that is remotely suggestive of the moral tales. The didactic *Anecdote for Fathers* had been published in 1798; but during the year 1802, when he composed many beautiful lines on childhood, including the well-known "Rainbow," he also wrote *Foresight*. This little poem is delightfully conceived, but mechanically expressed. He had approached too closely to the bald didacticism of the moral-tale writers to follow his inspiration freely. The subtitle, "the charge of a child to his younger companion," which was later discarded, indicates the didactic spirit in which he was working. The subject matter is botanical, and the moral smacks, if not of what Leigh Hunt called "sordid and merely plodding morals," of the thrift and reward morality.<sup>1</sup> It differs from moral tales in that there is a certain indefinable

<sup>1</sup> Compare Dorothy's *Loving and Liking* (1832):

Yet, listen, Child—I would not preach;  
But only give some plain directions  
To guide your speech and your affections.

See also *The Poet's Dream* and *The Longest Day*.

Compare *To a Young Lady on her Birth-Day, Being the First of April*, anonymously printed in *A Classical Arrangement of Fugitive Poetry*, vol. XV, p. 49:

Let others write for bye-designs,  
I seek some moral in my lines,  
Which whosoever reads must bear,  
Or great, or learned, or young, or fair.



charm in the dialogue of the children who are out in the fields in early spring.

With his customary dependence on Dorothy's diary, he capitalized her regret over having plucked a strawberry-blossom in January. He was stimulated by her remark that as a child she would never have pulled a strawberry-blossom. That very day he came in with the poem, known in the household as "Children Gathering Flowers." The charge of the elder child is dramatically conceived.

That is a work of waste and ruin—  
Do as Charles and I are doing!  
Strawberry-blossoms, one and all,  
We must spare them—here are many:  
Look at it—the flower is small,  
Small and low, though fair as any.

The child's insistence on the difference in age reveals Wordsworth's ability and willingness to weave a common trait of child nature into his poem:

Do not touch it! summers two  
I am older, Anne, than you.

By avoiding the negative suggestion, Wordsworth conceived the elder child as a true monitor who centers the younger child's attention on other flowers.

Pull the primrose, sister Anne!  
Pull as many as you can.  
—Here are daisies, take your fill;  
Pansies, and the cuckoo-flower:  
Of the lofty daffodil  
Make your bed, or make your bower;  
Fill your lap, and fill your bosom;  
Only spare the strawberry-blossom!

Then he enters upon a train of thought that leads to the moral of the poem.

God has given a kindlier power  
To the favoured strawberry-flower.  
Hither soon as spring is fled  
You and Charles and I will walk;  
Lurking berries, ripe and red,  
Then will hang on every stalk,  
Each within its leafy bower;  
And for that promise spare the flower!

Nature alone, then, is not sufficient. Her tutorings need to be supplemented. By the time he published *The Excursion*, he had awakened to the need of popular education. His vision of a system of state education for children marks him as a pioneer poet among those men of letters who appreciated the need of universal education. He appealed to church and state to realize their responsibilities in the education of children. His extended notice of educational problems, and the obvious sincerity of his intention, must have had an appreciable effect on the ever-widening circle of his readers.

Elementary education in England was dependent upon local initiative, and was supplemented by the philanthropical work of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, and by the Sunday School. There is no doubt that these efforts, together with the monitorial systems of Lancaster and Bell, paved the way for universal education. But the state had uniformly neglected its responsibilities, and it was not until eighteen years after Wordsworth had called attention to the needs of elementary education that the first Parliamentary grant was made in 1833. The grant of twenty thousand pounds, designed solely to aid in building schoolhouses, had to be passed as a supply bill, which was not required to go to the House of Lords, where as progressive legislation it would have been killed.

In the course of vital discussion which is recorded in the eighth book of *The Excursion*, the Wanderer touched upon the failure of state and church to realize their duties in the education of children. He took his illustration from the Lake District, where children were more favorably situated than in most counties of England. He drew an unpleasant picture of the stiff-legged, awkward ploughboy under whose shaggy brow are set sluggish and lustreless eyes

Proclaiming boldly that they never drew  
A look or motion of intelligence  
From infant-conning of the Christ-cross-row,  
Or puzzling through a primer, line by line,  
Till perfect mastery crown the pains at last.  
(*Excursion*, VIII, 411-415)

The state had neglected him, and what can now penetrate the crust in which his soul sleeps "like a caterpillar sheathed in ice." He has not partaken of the equal rights that are boasted in his country's name. These lines indicate clearly that Wordsworth was not blinded by his conception of an ideal peasantry, but noticed the problem of popular education as faced by Hannah More in the dreadful conditions at rural Cheddar.

The plight of children was, however, worse in cities, where an inventive age had converted at "social Industry's command," peaceful hamlets or tracts of wood into teeming industrial centers. Here the abodes of men are irregularly massed as thickly as trees in a forest:

And tottering hovels, whence do issue forth  
A ragged Offspring. (VIII, 346-348)

Here the "smoke of unremitting fires Hangs permanent." Wordsworth writes of the "deformities of crowded life." In place of the ancient, peaceful starry night that gave re-



pose to man, he sees an "unnatural light" that shines from a huge many-windowed factory where labor never ceases. In place of the curfew, man hears the harsh bell that punctually calls to unceasing toil. As the day laborers are disgorged, the night shift enters to the rumbling sound of "dizzy wheels":

Men, maidens, youths,  
Mother and little children, boys and girls,  
Enter, and each the wonted task resumes  
Within this temple, where is offered up  
To Gain, the master idol of the realm,  
Perpetual sacrifice. (VIII, 180-185)

Wordsworth does not rest in a sentimental contrast between the worship in this temple and that of his ancestors in vast cathedral or conventual church where tapers burned day and night in honor of God alone. He does not stop with a condemnation of the profane rites at the altar of gain, or the desecration of streams turned into "instruments of bane" to tempt those from simplicity whose ancestors drank pure water from them. He turns to face a real problem which arose with the factory life that broke up the home. In the neighborhood of factories, homes are empty from morning to evening,

The Mother left alone,—no helping hand  
To rock the cradle of her peevish babe;  
No daughters round her, busy at the wheel,  
Or in dispatch of each day's little growth  
Of household occupation; no nice arts  
Of needle-work; no bustle at the fire,  
Where once the dinner was prepared with pride.  
(VIII, 267-273)

Nothing is left of domestic bliss to speed the day or cheer the mind. Wordsworth has phrased here an outline of the problem which enlightened men and women are still hoping

to solve. Wordsworth's interest is altogether focused on children who are deprived of their birthright because economists contend that the state thrives by child labor — an “unfeeling thought.”<sup>1</sup> He calls the doctrine “false as monstrous.” He would banish wisdom that forces upon the child, because of “premature necessity,” work that shuts off development of mind and heart, and makes “its very spring a season of decay” by “long captivity” and “inward chains” unworthy of a native Briton, and imposed “without his own consent.”

In *Humanity* (1829) Wordsworth is impatient with those who defend “qualified oppression” on the “hollow plea of recompense.” Such arguments are

Fetched with cupidity from heartless schools,  
That to an Idol, falsely called “the Wealth  
Of Nations,” sacrifice a People’s health,  
Body and mind and soul; a thirst so keen  
Is ever urging on the vast machine  
Of sleepless Labour, ’mid whose dizzy wheels  
The Power least prized is that which thinks and feels.

Wordsworth had not lost his early enthusiasm, and adhered to his high vision for the welfare of man as the inheritor of that happiness which comes only through living in harmony with nature. The late poem *To the Utilitarians* (1833) is characterized by the same spirit which informs his plea for imagination in the education and reading matter of children.

Avaunt this economic rage!  
What would it bring?—an iron age,  
Where Fact with heartless search explored  
Shall be Imagination’s Lord,

<sup>1</sup> Compare the remark imputed to Pitt, who is said to have dismissed a delegation of complaining factory owners with the words, “Take the children.”

And sway with absolute control  
 The god-like Functions of the Soul.  
 Not *thus* can knowledge elevate  
 Our Nature from her fallen state.  
 With sober Reason Faith unites  
 To vindicate the ideal rights  
 Of human-kind—the tone agreeing  
 Of objects with internal seeing,  
 Of efforts with the end of Being.

His objection is not to industry itself. But Wordsworth would have men go back to the cottage industry which kept children affectionately under the eye of parents. The simple life of cottagers was ever in his thoughts. From his poetry may be culled passages that would reconstruct a complete picture of spinning and weaving in the cottage. *The Brothers* (1800) provides such details:

Upon the stone  
 His wife sate near him, teasing matted wool,  
 While, from the twin cards toothed with glittering wire,  
 He fed the spindle of his youngest child,  
 Who, in the open air, with due accord  
 Of busy hands and back-and-forward steps,  
 Her large round wheel was turning.<sup>1</sup>

His heart is in the lines from one of the Lucy poems (1799):

And she I cherished turned her wheel  
 Beside an English fire.

This attitude lies at the root of his faith in the simple life as the hope of man. When he observes the terrible conditions of child labor at industrial centers, he cries out against those who seek to justify their preference for these conditions in place of the traditional home industry that had been carried on in a happy England.

<sup>1</sup> Compare *The Excursion* (Book I, l. 890): "The little child who sate to turn the wheel."



The Father, if perchance he still retain  
 His old employments, goes to field or wood,  
 No longer led or followed by the Sons;  
 Idlers perchance they were,—but in *his* sight;  
 Breathing fresh air, and treading the green earth;  
 'Till their short holiday of childhood ceased,  
 Ne'er to return! That birthright now is lost.  
 Economists will tell you that the State  
 Thrives by the forfeiture—unfeeling thought,  
 And false as monstrous! Can the mother thrive  
 By the destruction of her innocent sons  
 In whom a premature necessity  
 Blocks out the forms of nature, preconsumes  
 The reason, famishes the heart, shuts up  
 The infant Being in itself, and makes  
 Its very spring a season of decay! (VIII, 276-291)

Wordsworth was justified in his condemnation of industrial abuses involving the evils of child labor. The First Factory Act of 1802, the "Health and Morals of Apprentices Act," was designed to protect children who were herded into woolen mills.<sup>1</sup> It limited work to twelve hours a day, stipulated that night work was to cease after 1804, and contained certain provisions about elementary education in the three R's. Whitewash alone, however, would not atone for unsanitary conditions, and the limitation of work to twelve hours merely reflects the terrible conditions under which children labored. It was not until after *The Excursion* that a more extensive act prohibited employment of children under nine. This act again justifies Wordsworth's denunciation of conditions as they existed during the composition of *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*. In spite of the earlier Act, a Royal Commission as late as 1833 found children working fifteen hours a day.

<sup>1</sup> The word *child* is not used in the Act of 1802; it does appear in the Act of 1833.

James Grahame's *The Birds of Scotland* contains affecting lines on the abuse of children in industry. Like the benevolists, he pities the caged bird, and in a sympathetic mood recalls that the bird's fate is no more pitiable than that of children confined in factories. If Grahame does not express himself with the power of Wordsworth, his lines nevertheless give a vivid picture of what one of Wordsworth's contemporaries saw in cities.

Nor is thy lot more hard than that which they  
 (Poor linnets!) prove in many a storied pile.<sup>1</sup>  
 They see the light, 'tis true they see, and know  
 That light for *them* is but an implement  
 Of toil. In summer with the sun they rise  
 To toil: nor does the shortened winter day  
 Their toil abridge: for, ere the cock's first crow,  
 Aroused to toil, they lift their heavy eyes,  
 And force their childish limbs to rise and toil.

Grahame had also a vision of traditional home industry, which had not robbed the child of freedom.

And while the winter night, by cottage fire,  
 Is spent in homebred industry, relieved  
 By harmless glee, or tale of witch, or ghost,  
 So dreadful that the housewife's listening wheel  
 Suspends its hum, their toil protracted lasts.

No joys, no sports have they: what little time,  
 The fragment of an hour, can be retrenched  
 From labour, is devoted to a shew,  
 A boasted boon, of what the public gives—  
 Instruction. Viewing all around the bliss  
 Of liberty, they feel its loss the more.

Children bound to industrial slavery see birds flitting past the factory windows,

But no sweet note by them is heard, all lost,  
 Extinguished in the noise that ceaseless stuns the ear.

<sup>1</sup> Cotton factories.

As with Crabbe, "stern Truth" led Grahame to a realization of the degradation of man through heartless exploitation of the child. Enamoured of the beauty of nature and the joy it gives man, he saw nothing but vice festering in smoky cities.

If such be the effects of that sad system,  
Which, in the face of nature's law, would wring  
Gain from the labouring hands of playful children;  
If such the effects, where worth and sense direct  
The living, intellectual machines,  
What must not follow, when the power is lodged  
With senseless, sordid, heartless avarice?

Wordsworth held that wherever the boy may turn, he is still a prisoner in the industrial system, and can not breathe God's free air that ought to be fanning his temples in woods and by the side of streams.

His raiment, whitened o'er with cotton flakes  
Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.  
Creeping his gait and cowering, his lip pale,  
His respiration quick and audible. (VIII, 309-312)

State and church have neglected their duties toward the industrial child as toward the ploughboy of remote districts. The poet can scarcely fancy that a gleam could break from the languid eyes of the factory boy, or a blush mantle on his cheek. This is not the human being who in childhood should enjoy liberty of mind and body, and the thrill of vivid physical sensation along the blood, to make him "Sublime from present purity and joy." (*Excursion* VIII, 320.) What can the state hope from manhood reared on such foundations? The Recluse exclaims that there is no hope for such children or for tens of thousands who are suffering a wrong as deep. From such as these, when they have been discarded by the factories, are recruited the abject



human shapes who in rags issue from tottering hovels or meet the traveler on the skirts of furze-clad commons to whine and stretch out their hands for coins (VIII, 364).

No one in England takes delight in this industrial oppression; the bondage goes by no high-sounding name. Yet women who have children of their own, behold this without compassion, yea, even with praise. The little group in the parsonage who have been discussing this grave problem, turn their thoughts to the happier theme of the "blooming boys" who come from a fishing expedition after having spent a few short hours as "thriving prisoners of the village-school." (IX, 260.) Their lot is a happy one. When they are grown men they will look back on childhood, and say that justice was shown them "alike to body and to mind." Then Wordsworth states his conception of popular education.

O for the coming of that glorious time  
 When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth  
 And best protection, this imperial Realm,  
 While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
 An obligation, on her part, to *teach*  
 Them who are born to serve her and obey;  
 Binding herself by statute to secure  
 For all the children whom her soil maintains  
 The rudiments of letters, and inform  
 The mind with moral and religious truth,  
 Both understood and practised,—so that none,  
 However destitute, be left to droop  
 By timely culture unsustained. (IX, 293-305)

The lisping babe proclaims this inherent right to the protection of its innocence; and the rude boy, "having overpast the sinless age," who is on mischief bent and turns the "god-like faculty of speech To impious use," thereby makes known the need of education. It is fruitlessly announced; but it mounts like a prayer "to reach the State's parental

ear." England will listen to the prayer if she is not unfeelingly devoid of a mother's heart.

Wordsworth then phrases a message to be heeded in our days as well as in the days after the Revolution and during the ferment before the Reform Bill. As he looks abroad on the continent of Europe, he sees long-reverenced laws and customs abolished, and territory split like Polar fields of ice rent by the wind. Discontent takes obnoxious shapes, that may overthrow law and order even in "these fair Isles." With keen insight he observes that the forces which blindly aim to subvert institutions would be thwarted if ignorance that breeds dark discontent, and runs into wild disorder, were removed by education. Education is no more than a prudent caution which requires that the whole people should be taught and trained so that "black resolve" may be rooted out, and virtuous habits take its place. He has faith that the voice of English lawgivers, sounding "From out the bosom of these troubled times," will work this general good and that England will "complete her glorious destiny." In those days she will behold in herself "change wide, and deep, and silently performed," arising

from the pains  
And faithful care of unambitious schools  
Instructing simple childhood's ready ear.

(IX, 394-396)

Since the moral crisis which had swept away his hopes for a regeneration of society through legislation, he had worked gradually toward the conception which sees in the education of the child the hope of the future. In the high vision of a society humanised the world over through education of the individual, he scornfully brushes aside as groundless the gloomy speculations of the Malthusians, who fear overpopulation.

With such foundations laid, avaunt the fear  
 Of numbers crowded on their native soil,  
 To the prevention of all healthful growth  
 Through mutual injury! Rather in the law  
 Of increase and the mandate from above  
 Rejoice! (IX, 363-368)

At the same time, although he does not like Berkeley turn his back on the old world, Wordsworth finds that the new world is necessary for a realization of his ideal. As bees divide in swarming time and find a new abode, so Englishmen will find new homes beyond the seas.

So the wide waters, open to the power,  
 The will, the instincts, and appointed needs  
 Of Britain, do invite her to cast off  
 Her swarms, and in succession send them forth;  
 Bound to establish new communities  
 On every shore whose aspect favours hope  
 Of bold adventure; promising to skill  
 And perseverance their deserved reward.

\*

Earth's universal frame shall feel the effect;  
 Even till the smallest habitable rock,  
 Beaten by lonely billows, hear the songs  
 Of humanised society; and bloom  
 With civil arts, that shall breathe forth their fragrance,  
 A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven. (IX, 375-391)

On the highways of England, Wordsworth had often observed the direct evil effects of child labor. It is an historical fact that children, because of their size, were peculiarly adapted for work at certain types of machines, so that the tradition of child labor very early became established. Ruthless parish officers, against whom Langhorne and Cowper inveighed, paid manufacturers five pounds a head for children taken off their hands, to be worked from the age of five, as in the Stockport hat trade,



fourteen hours in the twenty-four. After these poor children had literally outgrown their usefulness, they were heartlessly turned loose upon the community without having learned a useful occupation. Wordsworth had observed the effects of this method, and his plan for universal education was designed to eliminate the helplessness of such children, who without education inevitably became beggars or criminals.

like the vagrants of the gipsy tribe,  
These, bred to little pleasure in themselves,  
Are profitless to others. (VIII, 389-391)

Three poems composed in 1802 reflect his humanitarian interest in children on the highways. *Beggars* and its sequel are delightful literary studies of vagrants; the poems represent careful observation of the rapidly changing moods of children. The vitality and care-free nature of these "joyous vagrants" who in the "twinkling of an eye" could change their interest from butterflies to begging, fascinated him. Nevertheless they stirred in him subtle misgivings for their future. They met him in a genial hour when all nature breathed happiness. Therefore his pessimism is tempered with a sunny optimism that struggles to give him hope.

Kind Spirits! may we not believe  
That they, so happy and so fair  
Through your sweet influence, and the care  
Of pitying Heaven, at least were free  
From touch of *deadly* injury?  
Destined, whate'er their earthly doom,  
For mercy and immortal bloom?

In *Sabbath Walk*, Grahame is likewise hopeful, and breathes prayers of thanks because toilers in factories may on the Lord's day walk by thousands in fields and meadows. It soothes his heart to see children of toilworn city dwellers

pull promiscuously weeds and flowers which "proudly" in their parent's breast "they smiling fix." This is a new situation in English poetry. It is pleasant to come upon children of the industrial class at play in the open fields, and enjoying what poets earlier in the century had observed only among cottage children in idyllic surroundings. Grahame's lines ring true and show direct observation especially in the failure of city-bred children to discriminate between weed and flower.

A study of Wordsworth's literary treatment of the humanitarian aspects of childhood may well close with a notice of *Alice Fell; or Poverty* (1802), which is important also as an illustration of literary tendencies. In earlier poetry, especially in that of Swift, Shenstone, and Cowper, children are found jeering in chorus at travellers on the highway. A sound with a different import followed the chaise occupied by Mr. Grahame of Glasgow, brother of the poet James Grahame. The incident made such a deep impression on this "man of ardent humanity," who was a helper of Clarkson, that he requested Wordsworth to put it into verse "for humanity's sake."

Wordsworth need not have been ashamed of the simple ballad of a child's mishap on the king's highway. It would have been better for his standing as a poet had he omitted Peter Bell, the abuser of animals, from the editions of 1820 to 1832. The simple story of Alice Fell, the orphan girl, whose cloak had been caught in the wheel of Mr. Grahame's chaise, on the back of which she had climbed, must have made an appeal even in the days when small critics were ridiculing the simplicity of Wordsworth's verse. His sympathy is clearly with the sobbing child who could only choke out the words "my cloak." He emphasizes the humanitarian traits of the charitable passengers: they left sufficient money

with the innkeeper to buy a cloak of "duffil gray." Wordsworth was attracted to the child who could not be consoled for the loss of her coat; weatherbeaten as it was, it had fended her against cold and rain. A child under such circumstances is capable of but one thought; and true to child nature, Wordsworth represents her as unconsolable throughout the journey to Durham.

*Alice Fell* represents the extreme rebound from the generalized attitude towards children. It is a detached poem on childhood, and it illustrates the fusion of concrete individualizing details with the humanitarian element. His insistence on accuracy of detail led him not only to give the child's name, but also to identify the city toward which she was riding. He wrote of her with a fine feeling that infuses his lines with the warmth and glow of humanity. The insistence on details is reflected in Lamb's letter written at the time when Wordsworth was thinking of revising the poem, possibly with an eye to pleasing his critics: "I am glad that you have not sacrificed a verse to those scoundrels. I would not have had you offer up the poorest rag that lingered upon the stript shoulders of little Alice Fell, to have atoned all their malice; I would not have given 'em a red cloak to save their souls."

Gay wrote with artistic detachment about slum children; Blake had the little chimney sweep voice a bitter protest against social conditions that oppressed city children; Crabbe laid bare with photographic realism the environment of children in filthy hovels. Wordsworth combined all these elements. He depicted the suffering and degradation of children in industry; he protested against the philosophy which sought to justify child labor; in concrete details he truthfully and convincingly set forth the conditions against which he protested. But Wordsworth added an element



not found in Gay, Blake, or Crabbe. He incorporated a definite program of reform that is more liberal than that of the House of Industry. With deep insight into the powers of nature and the faculties of man, he offered practical suggestions for a measurable realization of his dreams of a happy state of childhood. His faith in the sanctity of childhood, and his unshakable belief in the natural right of every child to enjoy the birthright of freedom, led him to a solution that is still being tested in the common schools of England and America.

#### IV

Wordsworth's most exalted conception of childhood is found in the *Ode Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1803-1806). The *Ode* is the glory of his poetry. It is also the crown of one hundred years of poetic treatment of childhood. He wrote of his contemplated master poem, which was never completed, and of which *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* form only a part, in terms of a cathedral, in relation to which his shorter poems stand as chantries and chapels. In this conception the incomparable *Ode* is worthy of the position of the Lady Chapel. Professor Knight, who took the poem out of its chronological position and placed it at the close of Wordsworth's collected works, considered it "the greatest of Wordsworth's poems, and that to which all others lead up."

The *Ode* is the summation not only of Wordsworth's philosophy (which found its base in childhood), but also of the attitude toward childhood reflected in those poets of the eighteenth century who have been noticed in this study. It is a final complete expression of the essence of those phases which are vital to the naturalistic interpretation. It is the natural and inevitable outgrowth of tendencies that had

become focused in Wordsworth during the years in which the *Ode* was composed. It reveals the profoundest and richest expression of Wordsworth's faith in the unsullied purity of the child's intuitions.

The first four stanzas were composed in 1803, and the remainder of the poem perhaps just before or immediately after the completion of *The Prelude*. Wordsworth wrote, "Two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining part." It was completed in 1806 and published in 1807. The *Ode* was conceived, then, in those years when his mind was occupied with recollection of his childhood during the composition of his autobiographical poem.

There were certain events of a domestic nature which also centered his attention on childhood and immortality at this time. During the month of August, 1802, William and Dorothy visited Calais, where he walked on Calais sands with his daughter, who is the child of the sonnet, "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free." The concluding lines state his faith in the divine element in children:

Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,  
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,  
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:  
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;  
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,  
God being with thee when we know it not.

In October, 1802, Mary Hutchinson, with whom he had attended Anne Birkett's infant school at Penrith in 1777, became his wife. In 1803, the year in which the *Ode* was begun, his son John was born; and in 1804 his daughter Dora. In February, 1805, his favorite brother John lost his life in the wreck of his ship. The poet's thoughts had since 1798 been occupied with childhood in relation to the soul life of man, and the death of his brother, whose loss

moved him deeply, centered his thoughts on the problem of immortality. The first four stanzas (1803) of the *Ode* are in the mood of *The Prelude*. When he took up the *Ode* again in 1805, he began with the well-known fifth stanza which adds the element not to be found in eighteenth-century poetry on the recollection of early childhood. He explains the divinity of childhood by proclaiming the continuity of existence.<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth more than half believed in this in spite of his palliative remarks addressed to orthodox readers in the Fenwick note: "But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its favour. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations."

In view of his high conception of the natural rights of children and the glory of childhood, it is not surprising that Wordsworth should have looked upon the child as an oracle of God newly come from his maker. It was in fact inevitable that he should do this, for to postulate a previous state of existence is but to carry one step farther the affectionate recollection of childhood in native fields. In *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* he holds in the main to the child living among men, and makes a plea for the natural rights of the child. In the *Ode* he gives an interpretation of those powers upon which the naturalistic conception may be based. He answers the question, "Why is the child capable of greater joy than man, and why should man reverence child-

<sup>1</sup> Although Beattie has written beautiful lines on the innocence and purity of children, he seems to have had no idea of a pre-existent state. In the *Ode to Hope* he writes:

When first on Childhood's eager gaze  
Life's varied landscape, stretched immense around,  
Starts out of night profound.



hood?" In the course of his solution of this mystery, Wordsworth has touched upon every motive of the theme of childhood noticed during the previous century. His solution may have been suggested by Platonic philosophy or by Vaughan.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the source of his inspiration, it was inevitable in the development of the naturalistic conception of innate goodness, that a poet should face the problem of finding the reason for the greater purity and happiness of children.

The earliest poetry in the tradition that leads to the *Ode*, reveals how the poet turned instinctively to cottage children. Thomas Warton had pictured in *The Hamlet* a sunny landscape peopled by care-free cottage children. Akenside and Bruce affectionately recalled their own childhood in the presence of nature; and in the revised version of his poem, Akenside is definitely suggestive of the cadence and rhythm

<sup>1</sup> Plato's *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, Henry Vaughan's *The Retreat*, *Corruption*, and *The World*, and Thomas Traherne's *Wonder*, offer parallels to Wordsworth's *Ode* in so far as they also adopt the doctrine of pre-existence. There are, however, in each instance, differences in application. An eighteenth-century anonymous poem *Pre-Existence A Poem in Imitation of Milton* refers to the Platonic conception of ideas. With Spenser's description of the "Garden of Adonis" in the *Faerie Queene* Wordsworth must have been familiar, as he and Dorothy were persistent readers of Spenser. Professor E. Hershey Sneath states that the reference to Plato in the Fenwick note "hardly warrants us in saying that he borrowed his doctrine from Plato. The roots of the Poet's conviction seem to have been imbedded in the subsoil of his trance-experiences of childhood, which gave him the consciousness of a world above, and more real than the natural world of sense . . . in trying to interpret this experience to himself, and then to others, so far as it related to pre-existence, he found his conviction sanctioned by Plato. But the conviction itself appears, ultimately to have had its origin in these unique experiences of childhood and youth."—*Wordsworth, Poet of Nature and Poet of Man*, by E. Hershey Sneath, Ginn and Company, 1912, p. 217.

of Wordsworth's most exalted recollections of a childhood influenced by mountains, forests, and streams. Beattie's *Minstrel* in the same decade depicts an individual child who responds sensitively to subtle influences emanating from external nature. In fact, Dorothy recognized points of likeness between Beattie's ideal "natural" boy and her brother William. Whether in the person of a Lavina or Edwin, or in the childhood of Bruce or Akenside, the child is at the center of naturalistic poetry. Naturalistic poetry reversed the methods of poets like Prior, who in their pre-occupation with the institutional child looked forward impatiently to manhood or womanhood. The romantic poets, in place of looking to man for a realization of their hopes, asked man to look back to childhood as the ideal state: to realize his highest hopes, man must become again a child. The element which stimulated poets to a new interest in children, and which added novelty to the mystical exaltation of the child by Christ, they found in Shaftesbury's philosophy that identified the good and the beautiful.

They did not feel it necessary to go to the noble savage to find natural instincts expressed with primitive clearness; here was the child fresh from the hands of nature, and living instinctively in harmony with the laws of nature. Bruce, Akenside, and Lovibond not only lovingly recalled childhood as the beautiful season of life, when God was immanent and the sole guiding force, but Lovibond exalted the child by holding him up as a model for men in their relation to created beings in the realm of external nature. In their childhood, and then only, these poets had been in full harmony with the spirit of love, which permeates the universe, and for a recognition of which Langhorne pleaded in *The Country Justice*. The days of childhood not only were those of true happiness, but it was then that "Life's morning

radiance had not left the hills"; it was in those early years of simple childhood that "Nature and those rustic powers" revealed a "light" that is seldom beheld by the grown man.

Like Blake, the poets of this school scorned unaided reason, not like Keats on purely esthetic grounds, but because reason alone will not help man to penetrate the mysteries of life. These are revealed, in their estimation, most fully in the primitive intuitions of the child, because he is closest to his maker. Wordsworth expresses this in his sonnet to Mrs. Southey (*Miscellaneous Sonnets*, XXXVI, 1837):

delegated Spirits comfort fetch  
To Her from heights that Reason may not win.  
Like Children, She is privileged to hold  
Divine Communion; both do live and move,  
Whate'er to shallow Faith their ways unfold,  
Inly illumined by Heaven's pitying love.

But this spirit of love, manifest in the child, is soon lost in the man:

Love pitying innocence, not long to last,  
In them.

Wordsworth is not toying in the *Ode*. He crystallizes the conception of the poets before his time by speaking of childhood in terms of faith and religion. In this way he interprets the reverence for childhood implied in the naturalistic attitude. The earlier poets emphasize the cares and glooms of age. Wordsworth, however, is interested in what survives in man from his childhood. In one of his latest highly inspired poems, the evening voluntary *Composed Upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty* (1818), he is stirred with the fervor characteristic of his earlier effusions. Once again he writes of common objects in a strain of exalted emotion that recalls the mood of *Tintern Abbey* and the *Ode* itself.

X Exam



Such hues from their celestial Urn  
 Were wont to stream before mine eye,  
 Where'er it wandered in the morn  
 Of blissful infancy.  
 This glimpse of glory, why renewed?  
 Nay, rather speak with gratitude;  
 For, if a vestige of those gleams  
 Survived, 'twas only in my dreams.  
 Dread Power! whom peace and calmness serve  
 No less than Nature's threatening voice,  
 If aught unworthy be my choice,  
 From THEE if I would swerve;  
 Oh, let Thy grace remind me of the light  
 Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;  
 Which, at this moment, on my waking sight  
 Appears to shine, by miracle restored;  
 My soul, though yet confined to earth,  
 Rejoices in a second birth!

He is here thinking of those "first-born affections" that are clearly evident in the "gleams" vouchsafed to the child but lost to the man. In *Maternal Grief* (1810) he writes:

The Child she mourned had overstepped the pale  
 Of Infancy, but still did breathe the air  
 That sanctifies its confines, and partook  
 Reflected beams of that celestial light  
 To all the Little-ones on sinful earth  
 Not unvouchsafed—a light that warmed and cheered  
 Those several qualities of heart and mind  
 Which, in her own blest nature, rooted deep,  
 Daily before the Mother's watchful eye,  
 And not hers only, their peculiar charms  
 Unfolded.

Wordsworth's high seriousness has transmuted the cruder ore of the eighteenth century. While writing of the soul in *Night Thoughts* (Book VI), Young, whose argument leads him to despise life, could only see in the "towering talents, and terrestrial aims" of a genius,

as thrown from her high sphere,  
The glorious fragments of a soul immortal,  
With rubbish mixt, and glittering in the dust.

Mackenzie exalted childhood in *Pursuits of Happiness*:

See fresh from nature's hand, unfettered youth.

But he was able to express his sense of loss only in the conventional manner:

But soon, too soon, the airy fabrics fall,  
And servile Reason lacqueys Interest's call:  
Now Caution creeps where Virtue stalked before,  
And cons the battered page of Prudence o'er.

The following lines from Beattie's *Ode to Hope* are typical of the best expression given before Wordsworth to the sense of something lost:

Ye days, that balmy influence shed,  
When sweet childhood, ever sprightly,  
In paths of pleasure sported lightly,  
Whither, ah, whither, are ye fled?  
Ye cherub train, that brought him on his way,  
O, leave him not midst tumult and dismay.

In his indomitable optimism, Thomson, although external, is close to Wordsworth. Thomson realizes a difference between age and youth, but is not moved to melancholy musings:

Bid the morn of youth  
Rise to new light, and beam afresh the days  
Of innocence, simplicity, and truth;  
To cares estranged, and manhood's thorny ways:  
What transport, to retrace our boyish plays,  
Our easy bliss, when each thing joy supplied;  
The woods, the mountains, and the warbling maze  
Of the wild brooks! (*Castle of Indolence*, Canto I)

Gray's recollection of his boyhood days at Eton is at times premonitory of the *Ode* in mood and phrasing, al-

though Gray like other eighteenth-century poets is not concerned in the same sense as Wordsworth with the spiritual relationship between child and nature.

Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,  
Ah fields beloved in vain,  
Where once my careless childhood strayed,  
A stranger yet to pain!  
I feel the gales, that from ye blow,  
A momentary bliss bestow,  
As waving fresh their gladsome wing  
My weary soul they seem to soothe,  
And redolent of joy and youth,  
To breathe a second spring.

If certain similarities are evident, the differences are also obvious. The earlier poets felt the emotion which prompted Wordsworth, but they are less sure and powerful in expression because they hold to physical aspects. The mood, moreover, has not been correlated with all the experiences of the poet's life. Wordsworth's highly developed local feeling, which was physical at bottom to be sure, and which attached itself to objects familiar from infancy, served, nevertheless, frequently to stir recollections of a subtler nature. As a result, the backward look is the mainspring of his poetic activities; recollection lies at the root of his being. When expounding his philosophy of the simple life, he is sooner or later sure to anchor his most inspired thoughts in childhood, and especially in the spiritual gleam that came to the child in the moments of his most intense delight in nature.

He was fully conscious of the important place he had assigned to the child as the chief factor in his carefully wrought philosophy. In the twelfth book of *The Prelude* he exclaims:



Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth  
 Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see  
 In simple childhood something of the base  
 On which thy greatness stands.

The days gone by

Return upon me almost from the dawn  
 Of life: The hiding-places of man's power  
 Open. . . . . (XII, 272-280)

The earlier poets have not expressed themselves with the same fullness, because, being precursors of Blake and Wordsworth, they did not realize all the implications of their attitude toward childhood. Wordsworth, on the other hand, had deliberately and by gradual stages evolved a philosophy in which childhood is the fundamental consideration. His lines reveal the power which comes with a full realization that the child is at the center of his philosophy.<sup>1</sup> In *The Prelude* he has written of childhood in terms of sanctification:

Our childhood sits,

Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne  
 That hath more power than all the elements.  
 I guess not what this tells of Being past,  
 Nor what it augurs of the life to come;  
 But so it is. . . . . (V, 507-512)

He employs the language of religion to reflect the sacredness of childhood.

Ah! why in age

Do we revert so fondly to the walks  
 Of childhood—but that there the Soul discerns  
 The dear memorial footsteps unimpaired

<sup>1</sup>Wordsworth, according to the Wordsworth *Concordance*, has used the following words in their different forms: *child*, over four hundred times; *babe* and *baby*, over one hundred times; *infant*, over one hundred and twenty-five times; *girl*, fifty times; and *boy*, over two hundred and fifty times.

Of her own native vigour; thence can hear  
Reverberations; and a choral song,  
Commingle with the incense that ascends,  
Undaunted, toward the imperishable heavens,  
From her own lonely altar? (*Excursion*, IX, 36-44)

Although specific indebtedness is not meant to be suggested, the extent to which Wordsworth is the recipient of influences at work for a century is evident in the way the *Ode* brings together and fuses into one majestic conception of childhood the vocabulary and imagery which may be found scattered throughout eighteenth-century poetry dealing with childhood. Where parallels exist he has converted the earlier imagery into something rich and strange. Where poets had often inclined to matter-of-fact statement, Wordsworth's lines reveal power and beauty that come only with imaginative realization. (The transmutation is like that in the closing lines of the beautiful tribute *To a Young Lady*. In prose and poetry of the eighteenth century there are innumerable references to Lapland, which seems to have had a fascination for the age; but the references with which Wordsworth must have been familiar from his reading are colorless and uninspired. With a master poet's sure sense of values he penetrates to the innermost beauty of the reference and emotionally fuses it with his promises for the old age of a mother of children:

an old age serene and bright,  
And lovely as a Lapland night,  
Shall lead thee to thy grave.

Although the poem *Pre-Existence* (*A Poem in Imitation of Milton*) does not touch upon childhood, it is important as constituting a possible link between Wordsworth's interest in childhood and his doctrine of a pre-existent state. Wordsworth was well read in the poetry of the eighteenth

century, and it is not at all improbable that he was acquainted with this poem.<sup>1</sup>

*Pre-Existence* recognizes a previous life of the soul. The anonymous poet changed the Miltonic conception so that the fallen angels are permanently enclosed in Hell. God passed judgment also on angels who, though they had joined in sedition, had since sued for "clemency and grace." These angels were condemned to live as human beings on the earth, where they are not, however, allowed to possess the faculties of their divine state. Beneath chaos sits Silence, from an urn in whose hands flows Lethe.

Hither compelled, each soul must drink long draughts  
Of those forgetful streams, till forms within,  
And all the great ideas fade and die:  
For if vast thought should play about a mind  
Inclosed in flesh, and dragging cumbrous life,  
Fluttering and beating in the mournful cage,  
It soon would break its gates and wing away:  
'Tis therefore my decree, the soul return  
Naked from off this beach, and perfect blank,<sup>2</sup>  
To visit the new world; and straight to feel  
Itself, in crude consistence closely shut,  
The dreadful monument of just revenge;  
Immured by heaven's own hand, and placed erect  
On fleeting matter, all imprisoned round  
With walls of clay: th' aetherial mould shall bear  
The chain of members, deafened with an ear,  
Blinded by eyes, and manacled in hands.  
Here anger, vast ambition, and disdain,  
And all the haughty movements, rise and fall,  
As storms of neighboring atoms tear the soul;

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth owned a set of Bell's volumes of collected poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth protests against this view in the *Ode*.



And hope, and love, and all the calmer turns  
 Of easy hours, in their gay gilded shapes,  
 With sudden run, skim o'er deluded minds,  
 As matter leads the dance. . . .

As men they will vainly strive to appease their longings, because their souls will not be free

till all in death  
 Shall vanish, and the prisoner, now enlarged,  
 Regains the flaming borders of the sky.

It seems, however, that the poet has allowed an obscure sense of a higher life to linger, but only as a torment to the clay-enclosed soul.

JUDGMENT, blinded by delusive SENSE,  
 Contracted through the cranny of an eye,  
 Shoots up faint languid beams, to that dark seat,  
 Wherein the soul, bereaved of native fire,  
 Sits intricate, in misty clouds obscured,  
 Even from itself concealed, and there presides  
 O'er jarring images with Reason's sway,  
 Which by his ordering more confounds their form . . .  
 The more he strives t' appease, the more he feels  
 The struggling surges of the darksome void  
 Impetuous, and the thick revolving thoughts  
 Encountering thoughts, image on image turned,  
 A Chaos of wild silence, where sometimes  
 The clashing notions strike out casual light,  
 Which soon must perish and be lost again  
 In the thick darkness round it. Now, he tries  
 With all his might to raise some weighty thought,  
 Of me, of fate, or of th' eternal round,  
 Which but recoils to crush the labouring mind.  
 High are his reasonings, but the feeble clue  
 Of fleeting images he draws in vain. . . .

Poems on outdoor play and native fields are in the direct line of development that leads to the *Ode*. But suggestions for the thought of the first four stanzas of the *Ode*, and for

the phraseology of all of it, are also to be found in poems on the subject of immortality. Wordsworth must have been familiar with Prior's *Solomon*, in the third book of which Prior brings together thoughts of childhood and immortality; with Young's *Night Thoughts*; with Isaac Hawkins Browne's *De Animi Immortalitate* (1759), translated by numerous versifiers, and especially by Soame Jenyns; and with Thomas Denton's *Immortality*. Similarity is often striking in lines on outdoor play and native fields. The difference, however, between poetry and versifying is more obvious in those poems that develop the theme of immortality. Denton, for instance, speaks of the rainbow as "moon-sprung Iris" and "roscid bow," and of the soul as "The ray divine, the pure ethereal mate," and in phrasing the specifically childhood element can not get beyond "prattling childhood lips with mimick air."

Yet certain lines in Denton's poem contain hints and sometimes definite suggestions that provide parallels for certain details in Wordsworth's development in the *Ode*. Denton seems to have had an inkling that the vital spirit, unlike the body which is subject to decay, is not limited to a terrestrial and a future life. In making out a case for immortality after death, he looks back to man's hour of birth, at which time the vital spirit is not so much born as re-awakened. He does not definitely postulate a pre-existent state; but he does seem to suggest that birth is not altogether the beginning of the vital principle which animates the human clay.

As when *Lucina* ends the pangsful strife,  
Lifts the young babe, and lights her lambent flame,  
Some powers new-waking hail the dawning life,  
Some unsuspended live, unchanged, the same;  
So from our dust fresh faculties may bloom,  
Some posthumous survive, and triumph o'er the tomb.

Wordsworth makes this precise and definite, clothes it in appropriate imagery in the lines beginning "The Soul that rises with us," and changes the emphasis by focusing the whole argument not on death but on birth.

Like Wordsworth, Denton immediately proceeds with his argument by discussing the influence of the body on the re-awakened soul.

This fibrous frame by nature's kindly law,  
Which gives each joy to keen sensation here,  
O'er purer scenes of bliss the veil may draw,  
And cloud reflection's more exalted sphere.  
When Death's cold hand with all dissolving power  
Shall the close tie with friendly stroke unbind,  
Alike our mortal as our natal hour  
May to new being raise the waking mind:  
On death's new genial day the soul may rise,  
Born to some higher life, and hail some brighter skies.

Wordsworth enriches this and makes it specific in

Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy.

He focuses his thought on the child, whereas Denton always approaches with reverse emphasis, his purpose being to prove immortality after death, at which time the soul will again be re-awakened.

In lines that precede those on birth, Denton also refers to the stages of the child's development. In Denton's lines Wordsworth might well have found certain headings for his development in the *Ode*.

See man, by varied periods fixt by fate,  
Ascend perfection's scale by slow degree:  
The plant-like foetus quits its senseless state,  
And helpless hangs sweet-smiling on the knee;  
Soon outward objects steal into the brain,  
Next prattling childhood lisps with mimic air,  
Then mem'ry links her fleet ideal train,  
And sober reason rises to compare,



The full-grown breast some manly passion warms,  
 It pants for glory's meed, or beats to love's alarms.  
 Then say, since nature's high behest appears  
     That living forms should change of being prove,  
 In which new joy the novel scene endears,  
     New objects rise to please, new wings to move;  
 Since man too, taught by sage experience, knows  
     His frame revolving treads life's varying stage,  
 That the man-plant first vegetating grows,  
     Then sense directs, then reason rules in age. . . .

Denton's poem, then, differs from the *Ode* in that it emphasizes immortality after death; in that the passages which are suggestive of Wordsworth's argument do not appear in the same sequence as in the *Ode*; and in that his phrasing is conventional. Yet Wordsworth, brooding over the loss of the freshness of the "gleam," and striving to find a philosophical basis for his exaltation of childhood, could have found in *Pre-Existence* and in Denton's *Immortality* suggestions for his backward look beyond the birth of the child.<sup>1</sup>

The differences between Wordsworth's emotional lines and the colder reasonings of the earlier poets are evident from a comparison with the third book of Prior's *Solomon*, which in certain respects offers parallels conceived in the mood of the early eighteenth century.

Prior is disturbed by the problem of earthly existence in relation to immortality. His colorless lines read like versified philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> In *Night Thoughts* Young writes:  
     God's image disinherited of day,  
     Here, plunged in mines, forgets a sun was made.

And again:

    Death but entombs the body, life the soul.  
 Young is concerned with Death, his thesis being that death is the great liberator.

Come, then, my soul; I call thee by that name,  
Thou busy thing, from whence I know I am.

\*

But how cam'st thou to be, or whence thy spring?

\*

Or, if thy great existence would inspire  
To causes more sublime, of heavenly fire  
Wert thou a spark struck off, a separate ray,  
Ordained to mingle with terrestrial clay.

He finds upon reflection that he came forth "naked" and must again lie "naked" in the tomb; he uses the word again in "helpless and naked, on a woman's knees." Prior is in a questioning mood. Wordsworth is not in doubt; he has a positive vision, expressed in imagery born of deep emotional faith:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home.

It was common enough before Wordsworth to write of human life as spent on an island or an isthmus. The idea that man looked across vast spaces, best expressed in terms of the illimitable ocean, was congenial to poets. Cowper wrote in *Retirement*:

Opening the map of God's extensive plan,  
We find a little isle, this life of man.

William Thompson had written in *Sickness* (Book IV, *The Recovery*),

While on this isthmus of my fate I lie,  
Jutting into Eternity's wide sea.

In the *Essay on Man*, Pope wrote,

Placed on this isthmus of a middle state.

Prior gave the same thought a different emphasis:

Amid two seas, on one small point of land,  
Weary'd, uncertain, and amazed, we stand:  
On either side our thoughts incessant turn;  
Forward we dread, and looking back we mourn;  
Losing the present in this dubious haste,  
And lost ourselves betwixt the future and the past.

Wordsworth's lines in *The Prelude* more definitely shape the thought, and are suggestive of his attitude in the *Ode*.

not less a tract  
Of the same isthmus, which our spirits cross  
In progress from their native continent  
To earth and human life. (V, 535-538)

In the *Ode*, Wordsworth's sonorous lines have clothed this thought with flesh and blood. Wordsworth has, moreover, definitely connected his lines with childhood.

Hence in a season of calm weather  
Though inland far we be,  
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither,  
Can in a moment travel thither,  
And see the Children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

There is also a vast difference between the nature passages of Prior and Wordsworth. Prior is impersonal and cold:

From his first fountain and beginning ouze,  
Down to the sea each brook and torrent flows.

Wordsworth, a century later, gives expression to personal love and observation:



I love the brooks which down their channels fret,  
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they.

Even when Prior is personal, he is colorless:

Each evening I behold the setting Sun,  
With downward speed into the Ocean run.

Wordsworth's brooding spirit identifies itself with the powers of nature:

The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.

At the close of *Solomon*, Prior breaks into a song of praise, but his imagery is conventional:

I said;—and instant had the priests prepare  
The ritual sacrifice and solemn prayer.  
Select from vulgar herds, with garlands gay,  
A hundred bulls ascend the way.  
The artful youth proceed to form the choir;  
They breathe the flute, or strike the vocal wire.  
The maids in comely order next advance;  
They beat the timbrel, and instruct the dance.

There is a vast difference between this early eighteenth-century statement and Wordsworth's naturalistic fervor a century later. Though there is a faint suggestion of the Biblical language used by Prior, who was writing with the biblical account as his primary source, Wordsworth sings his song of praise in terms of the naturalistic school:

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!  
And let the young Lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound!

We in thought will join your throng,  
Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
Ye that through your hearts today  
Feel the gladness of the May!

What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now forever taken from my sight,

Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind;  
In the primal sympathy  
Which having been must ever be.

Unlike eighteenth-century poets like Gray, Beattie, Isaac Hawkins Browne, and others who wrote in imitation of Milton, and who could see no way out of the melancholy induced by contemplation of the difference between age and youth, Wordsworth catches at least temporarily the consoling gleam. He carries over the gloomier conception of the earlier poets only to protest against it and to triumph over it.

In the eighteenth century there are numerous hymns and odes to health; but all have to do with physical joy or its loss. Only occasionally is the matter connected definitely with childhood. Wordsworth's power to take the cruder conceptions of minor versifiers and suffuse them with spiritual suggestions is obvious when his lines are read with those in Isaac Hawkins Browne's *Ode to Health*. Browne calls upon "rosy Health" to return and be

Indulgent now as once you smiled,  
In golden Youth's propitious May,  
When jocund danced my hours away,  
With love, and joy, and rapture blest,  
And thou wast there to crown the rest.

His poem is a curious jumble of pagan and ascetic ideals. With one eye on Milton, and the other on nature, he is not successful in phrasing a clear-cut development of his theme. In the closing stanzas, however, while he is contemplating nature in spring, Browne pauses long enough to realize his sense of something lost between youth and old age:

Through every form of mystic birth,  
 The swarming air, the teeming earth,  
 Through all the fruitful deep contains,  
 Thy sovereign vital influence reigns,  
 Mixes, ferments, inspires the whole,  
 Pours the glad warmth, the genial soul,  
 Breathes in the breeze, distils in showers,  
 Swells the young bud, and wakes the flowers:  
 With livelier green the herbage springs,  
 The violet blows, the linnet sings,  
 Its richest colouring Nature wears,  
 And Pleasure leads the wanton years.

This merely reminds him that he can not regain the health of his childhood:

O! see I pine distressed, forlorn,  
 And seek in vain thy wished return.

Certain lines in the *Ode* and in Langhorne's *To the River Eden* (1759) emphasize an essential difference in power of insight and phrasing. Both poets were occupied with the recollection of childhood in the presence of natural objects, and both definitely reacted to their inability in later years to identify themselves with nature as fully as in the days of childhood. Langhorne is almost wholly external and descriptive, and hardly feels the later poet's identity of self with nature. (He came so close, however, to Wordsworth's mood that it is not surprising to find that Wordsworth thought very highly of Langhorne's poetry. Langhorne would have the "maids of Memory" waken recollections of the days when Nature impressed "her image on my mind." There still come to him flashes of the old delight in nature. In the tree beside his favorite stream he once again finds a congenial stimulus:

The poplar tall, that waving near  
 Would whisper to thy murmurs free;  
 Yet rustling seems to soothe mine ear,  
 And trembles when I sigh for thee.



Like Wordsworth he realizes that he can not live over again the joys of childhood:

In vain—the maids of Memory fair  
No more in golden visions play.

His visions are of play hours, friendship, and love ("No Delia's smile approves my lay"). He is sorrowful not so much because he misses something in nature, as because he can not reproduce the joys of his childhood. Like Browne he is sighing for a return of palpable pleasures enjoyed in the presence of nature.

Wordsworth, on the other hand, is momentarily moved to sorrow because his visions have to do with spiritual matters. He is searching for the "gleam" in nature itself. He can no longer sustain the impression of a subtle power to which he responded spontaneously in childhood. His misgivings are precipitated and crystallized when he looks upon familiar objects which no longer as in boyhood sustain the mood for which he longs.

But there's a Tree, of many, one,  
A single Field which I have looked upon,  
Both of them speak of something that is gone:  
The Pansy at my feet  
Doth the same tale repeat:  
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Although Wordsworth gave fullest expression to their conception, there is, then, an essential difference between him and those poets who had written feelingly of nature and childhood. This lies first in the power to convey his sense of the "gleam." And secondly, although moved to grief over loss, he does not feel that the loss is complete, so that he is thankful for what remains. He added, furthermore, the thought of continuous existence. After tracing the

soul's coming in trailing clouds of glory, he exalts the child in a passage that carries to its inevitable conclusion the conception for which poets had been groping since Shaftesbury and Thomson. Many readers are doubtful whether the passage should, or even can, be literally interpreted. Nevertheless, it truly represents the highest poetic flight in the spirit of those poets who down through the eighteenth century had looked upon the child with increasing affection, understanding, and reverence.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
 Thy Soul's immensity;  
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,  
 Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—  
 Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!  
 On whom those truths do rest,  
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
 In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
 Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
 Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,  
 A Presence which is not to be put by;

\*  
 Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might  
 Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
 Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?  
 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,  
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

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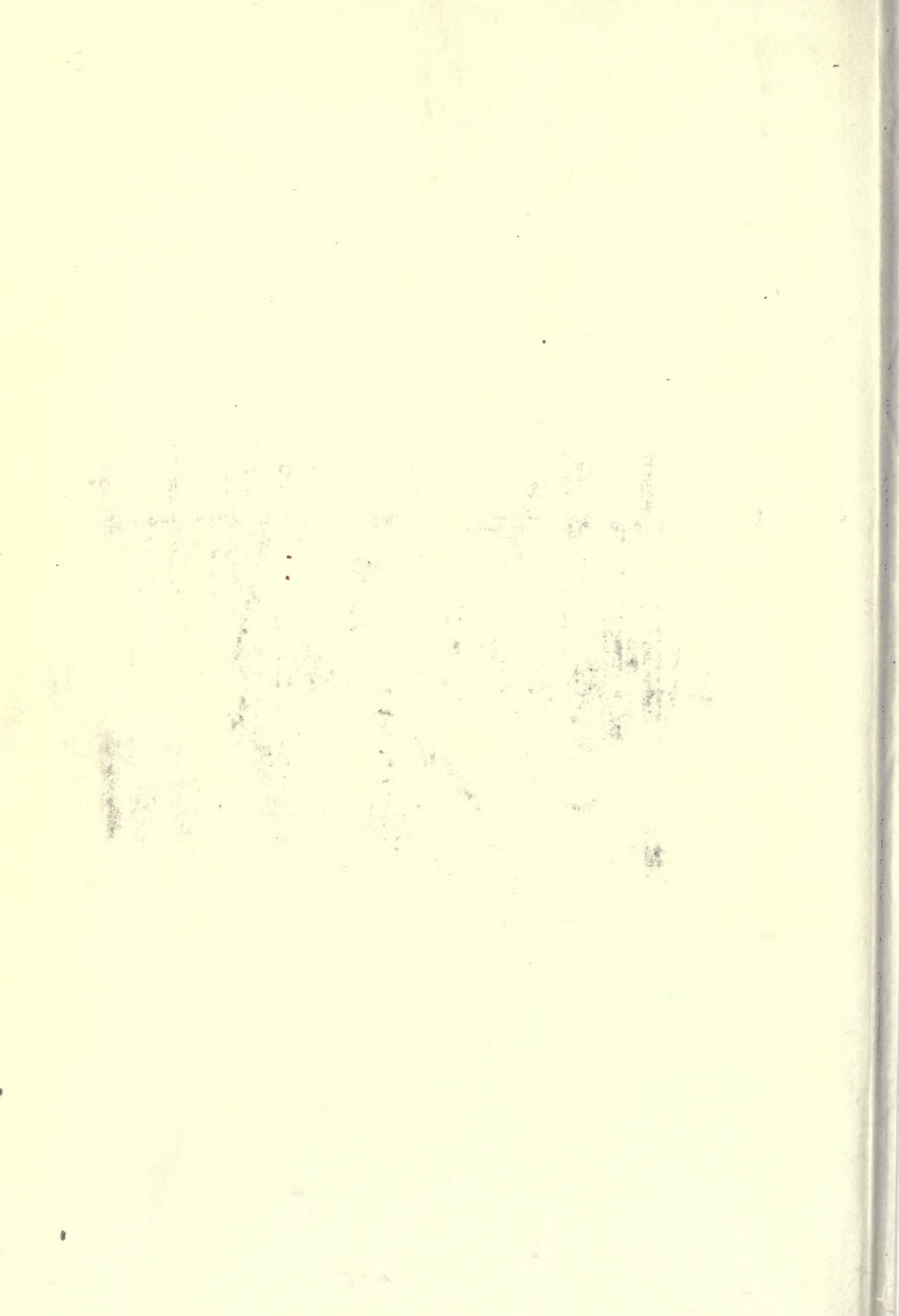














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